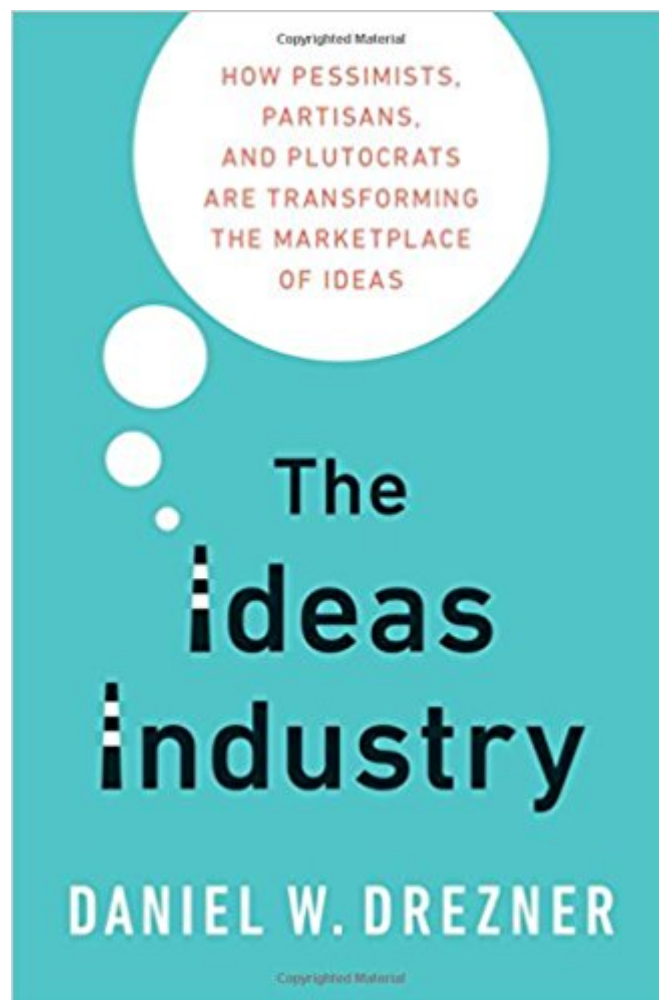




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# The Ideas Industry: How Pessimists, Partisans, And Plutocrats Are Transforming The Marketplace Of Ideas.



## Synopsis

The public intellectual, as a person and ideal, has a long and storied history. Writing in venues like the New Republic and Commentary, such intellectuals were always expected to opine on a broad array of topics, from foreign policy to literature to economics. Yet in recent years a new kind of thinker has supplanted that archetype: the thought leader. Equipped with one big idea, thought leaders focus their energies on TED talks rather than highbrow periodicals. How did this shift happen? In *The Ideas Industry*, Daniel W. Drezner points to the roles of political polarization, heightened inequality, and eroding trust in authority as ushering in the change. In contrast to public intellectuals, thought leaders gain fame as single-idea merchants. Their ideas are often laudable and highly ambitious: ending global poverty by 2025, for example. But instead of a class composed of university professors and freelance intellectuals debating in highbrow magazines, thought leaders often work through institutions that are closed to the public. They are more immune to criticism--and in this century, the criticism of public intellectuals also counts for less. Three equally important factors that have reshaped the world of ideas have been waning trust in expertise, increasing political polarization and plutocracy. The erosion of trust has lowered the barriers to entry in the marketplace of ideas. Thought leaders don't need doctorates or fellowships to advance their arguments. Polarization is hardly a new phenomenon in the world of ideas, but in contrast to their predecessors, today's intellectuals are more likely to enjoy the support of ideologically friendly private funders and be housed in ideologically-driven think tanks. Increasing inequality as a key driver of this shift: more than ever before, contemporary plutocrats fund intellectuals and idea factories that generate arguments that align with their own. But, while there are certainly some downsides to the contemporary ideas industry, Drezner argues that it is very good at broadcasting ideas widely and reaching large audiences of people hungry for new thinking. Both fair-minded and trenchant, *The Ideas Industry* will reshape our understanding of contemporary public intellectual life in America and the West.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Daniel Drezner is Professor of International Politics at Tufts University and a regular contributor to the Washington Post. Along with having one of the most heavily trafficked blogs in the world of academia, he is also the author of *The System Worked*; *Theories of International Relations and Zombies*; *All Politics is Global*; and *The Sanctions Paradox*.

Long stream of consciousness re the book. Feel free to not read. Some of this is musing about the past. This is an interesting, easily readable book. It is not a fountain of wisdom on what "should be" however, it is reasonably balanced assessment from an academic. The book inventories sources of policy ideas, in particular focusing on the role of academia as experts. The section on think tanks is interesting, brought back memories, McKinsey both praised and panned. Other think tanks are portrayed positively/negatively (Tetlock's analyses on accuracy of "experts" for forecasting are incisive | experts less accurate than amateurs | references Superforecasting but "Expert Political Judgment: How Good Is It? How Can We Know?" is the book to get). Drezner explains Heritage Foundation, how it went downhill after DeMint took over moving to ideological instead of pursuit of intellectual rigor in advancement of ideas. He explains that ideological polarization has come to universities however, still advocates professors entering into the public ideas game, being the foxes in the Berlin parable in contrast to TED talkers and idea evangelists who are hedgehogs capably pushing their one idea (Tetlock offers detailed histories and data for how the hedgehogs fail, fixated on the one thing they are "experts"). A example from my past of pushing the 1 big idea is a professor turned consultant pushing a "new" methodology, actually a warmed over version of Porter's work, new packaging. It was obvious he had no idea how to operationalize it, learning from his clients, not an uncommon consultant practice. Some of the orthodoxy was unusable but company staff plugged on, doing what they were told. This was during the heady days

of mid 1990's re-engineering and "revolutionary" management thinking. Reading this book brought back the memory of evangelism triumphing over common sense. Among other things, this is a survey of how new ideas on public policy are brought forth. Denzer goes on to describe major policy "thought leader types", with significant criticisms surrounding each. Then he launches into an exposition on whether the ideas industry "works". There is a discussion of the business side, more detailed on Clayton Christensen and the theory of disruption ... including how "disruption" hit a pothole with criticisms about whether it was well founded and its (in)applicability outside of business. Second last short chapter is on tweeting, retweeting, online debates. Interesting anecdotes, not insights you can use. Last one is a recap of views found throughout the book. The book is readable because filled with real stories to illustrate points, sometimes more than needed, entertaining throughout. It's worth your time but don't look for anything you can put to immediate use.

No an easy read but info loaded

The main thing I got out of this book is that it is excellent for becoming familiar with the modern actors and entities in international affairs within the US. It mentions several important people and institutions in the field of IR and gives a great summary on their applicability. Otherwise the book presents very fun and interesting points of contention. The entire time I was reading this book I couldn't help but get excited to read more IR literature afterwards, as well as follow a few more interesting twitter pages to become more familiar with the domestic ideas industry

This was an interesting book that started out well. The idea of the public intellectual and the thought leader as juxtaposed to one another was really quite interesting. But then it devolved into an analysis of thought Leaders with only a little bit of attention paid to public intellectuals. As a result we have a book that is more about thought leaders than anything else. Perhaps this is the way it should be, perhaps this is the only way it could be. However, this book is less interesting for the fact that it is mostly about thought Leaders with little or no attention paid to public intellectuals.

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