MADRID — Canadian historian and writer Michael Ignatieff has won Spain’s Princess of Asturias Award for Social Sciences for his “critical reflections on the major conflicts of our time,” prize organizers said Wednesday.

With more than 20 books that range from human rights, foreign policy, economics, and nationalism, among other topics, the 77-year-old Ignatieff has become, in the jury’s words, "an essential reference to navigate our current times of war, political polarization and threats to freedom.”

His titles include “The Needs of Strangers” (1984), “Isaiah Berlin: A Life” (1998), and “Human Rights as ***Politics*** and Idolatry” (2001). He also has published numerous articles and opinion columns.

Ignatieff has taught and researched at many of the world’s leading universities, including Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford, and was rector of the Central European University.

He was also heavily involved in Canadian ***politics***, rising to its Liberal Party's presidency in 2009 and leading the opposition in parliament.

The 50,000-euro ($54,000) Princess of Asturias Award is one of eight prizes covering areas including the arts, communication, science and sports that are handed out annually by the foundation.

French historian Hélène Carrère d’Encausse won last year’s prize for the social sciences.

The awards ceremony presided over by Spain's Princess Leonor takes place each fall in the northern Spanish city of Oviedo.