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Recognizing 2023 ISA Distinguished Scholars: Eytan Gilboa and Nicholas J. Cull

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Before we close out the year with awards and recognition, there were two major awards handed out earlier this year honoring two CPD scholars. Eytan Gilboa received the 2023 Distinguished Scholar Award in International Communication, and Nicholas J. Cull received the 2023 Distinguished Scholar Award in Diplomatic Studies from the International Studies Association (ISA). This recognition by ISA, the largest academic association in the international relations field is huge — not only for our two PD colleagues, but for the field of public diplomacy.

For both, this year's recognition is long overdue.

Eytan Gilboa

Prof. Eytan Gilboa of Bar Ilan University was the first to receive his award. He established the School of Communication and the Center for International Communication at Bar-Ilan and was the head of both. As a pioneer in the field of international communication, he fought to establish the International Communication division of ISA in 2000. He has been at the forefront in helping to grow the field of public diplomacy and put it on the map – academically and literally.

During Gilboa's award ceremony, Nick Cull described his initial encounter with Gilboa's energy alighting on the USC campus as a "force of nature."

Gilboa had arrived in September 2005 for a sabbatical at USC and a vision to build CPD and the CPD summer institute. Today, the institute is still thriving. During his career, Gilboa has shared his institution-building skills with universities around the globe.

Well before public diplomacy's academic roots took hold, Gilboa had grasped the paramount role of communication — particularly the news media — in shaping public opinion, and in turn, international relations and diplomacy.

He jumped headlong into the debate over "the CNN effect." CNN's 24-hour live coverage of the 1990 Gulf War was a jolt to policymakers and diplomats. For the first time, we had the technology — global satellites and cable network — to broadcast TV images around the clock and around the world.

Gilboa introduced the idea of "media diplomacy," highlighting the role and impact the media played in diplomacy. He would go on to sketch out the theoretical distinctions between public diplomacy, media diplomacy and media-broker diplomacy. Several of his insights on the role of news and media during conflict and peacebuilding have even more relevance today despite the dramatic shift from mass media to social media.

After 9/11 and the mushrooming of scholarship in public diplomacy, Gilboa again jumped headlong into the debates. His 2008 piece, "Searching for a Theory for Public Diplomacy," was a rallying cry for scholars to sharpen their focus and build a theoretical foundation. James Pamment, who spoke at Gilboa's ceremony, recalled first reading that piece. The field was all over the place and Gilboa brought it all into focus "with simplicity and elegance. You set the (PD) agenda with that piece."

Indeed, for those who track Google citations, that one piece has been cited more than 1,280 times. That citation does not include his prolific writings, 15 books and more than 200 articles and book chapters in leading journals and major handbooks. His latest edited collection, *A Research Agenda for Public Diplomacy*, published this summer is another pathbreaking contribution to the field.

While his scholarly impact on the field is one aspect, his mentorship is also laudable. For me, he was the inspiration behind the ISA and ICA Emerging Scholars panel. Over the years I worked on those panels, Gilboa has been a mainstay. As all on the ISA panel noted, Prof. Gilboa has given generously of his time, knowledge, and encouragement to scholars at every stage of their careers. For that, we and the field of public diplomacy are eternally grateful, making his award so well deserved.

Nicholas J. Cull

Perhaps as one of the most prolific and cited scholars with field-defining pieces in public diplomacy, Nick Cull's ISA Distinguished Scholar Award in Diplomatic Studies was also long overdue.

Cull became the director of the Masters in Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California in 2005. At the award ceremony, James Pamment described Cull's behind-the-scenes unbounded energy in championing the cause of public diplomacy at conferences and other venues around the world.

Cull, a historian by training, documented the activities of the U.S. Information Agency during the Cold War in his pathbreaking book on public diplomacy. His other iconic works include an early piece on the evolution of the term "public diplomacy," and the well-known taxonomies of public diplomacy.

Our community of scholars and the field of public diplomacy is immensely grateful for the contributions of Eytan Gilboa and Nicholas J. Cull.

His co-edited collection for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* became a foundational work for the field. He wrote on the concurrent rise of public diplomacy and social media in "Public Diplomacy 2.0."

He partnered with Nancy Snow to produce the second edition of the *Routledge Handbook on Public Diplomacy*. Snow, who grew up with five brothers, described Nick as her "scholarly brother" during the ceremony.

His most recent book, *Public Diplomacy*, has become a defining PD text with translations already in Chinese, Italian and Spanish.

In the book and recent pieces, he moves public diplomacy beyond its reliance on soft power as positive attraction to a more expansive grounded role that addresses the negatives to ensure "reputational security." He defined reputational security earlier as "the degree of safety accruing to a nation-state that proceeds from being known by citizens of other nations."


Reputational security may well be a game-changer for the field. As he noted, it accounts for the negatives that can challenge and undermine the security of a nation. He cites the example of Ukraine in 2014, which was largely unknown as lacking reputational security, making it vulnerable to unhindered aggression.

Reputational security, I believe, spotlights the all-important social and emotional dimensions that have long been missing from traditional and state-centric public diplomacy. Reputation hits at the heart of who we are as social animals. What others think of us matters.

Perhaps most exciting, reputational security opens up new research veins for policy applications and strategies. In many societies around the world, "reputation" is privileged as a

social and political currency. Individuals don't just accumulate it. They can use it. They can spend it, and even leverage it just as one might with political or social capital.

Beyond Cull's prolific and field-defining scholarship, there is also his mentorship. Pamment and Ilan Manor spoke movingly of his help to them. I, too, have witnessed and been on the receiving end of his generosity of intellect and spirit.

During the ceremony (and in a recent [autobiographical essay](#) ) , Cull offered an insight into his writing and person by sharing how he spent summers at a Danish farmhouse with other kids from diverse backgrounds: "In some ways, the others were not like me, but in other ways, they were just like me."

That sense of connection and caring reverberates throughout his work. In many ways, it also captures his personhood and ability to connect with others around the world.

Our community of scholars and the field of public diplomacy is immensely grateful for the contributions of Eytan Gilboa and Nicholas J. Cull. Thank you and congratulations to both for their 2023 ISA Distinguished Scholar awards.
