

ISABEL Y. CAI

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Education

Harvard University

M.A., Regional Studies East Asia

Cambridge, MA

Sep 2025 - May 2027

Stanford University

B.A., Political Science

Stanford, CA

CISAC Interschool Honors Program in International Security Studies

Sep 2021 - Jun 2025

Thesis: “Cautious Wolf Warrior: How Economic Interdependence Moderates China’s Rhetoric on the South China Sea Issue,” advised by Michael Tomz

Research Interests

International political economy, globalization, state-business relations, authoritarian regimes, Chinese foreign policy

Works in Progress

“Firm-level Drivers of China’s Outward Foreign Direct Investment”

“Nationalist Supporters of Economic Globalization”

Grants and Fellowships

McDonald Student Fellowship, Hoover Institution

2024

Political Science Summer Research Grant, Stanford University

2024

Political Science Summer Research Grant, Stanford University

2023

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Yuhua Wang

Project on China’s economic elite

Cambridge, MA

Oct 2025 - Present

Lead Research Assistant to Oriana Mastro

Books on China’s military build-up and Sino-Soviet military alliances

Stanford, CA

Apr 2023 - Jun 2025

Research Assistant to Michael McFaul

Book on U.S.-China-Russia great power competition

Stanford, CA

Jun 2024 - Sep 2024

Research Assistant to Erin Baggott Carter

Book on the role of domestic politics on U.S.-China relations

Stanford, CA

Sep 2023 - Jun 2024

Research Assistant to Scott Sagan

Projects on ethical and legal implications of nuclear weapons

Stanford, CA

Jun 2023 - Sep 2023

Professional Experience

Nodal Engineering

Co-Founder and COO

Remote

Sep 2025 - Present

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Carnegie China Young Ambassador

Remote

Sep 2023 - Jun 2024

Embassy of Jamaica

Administrative Intern

Beijing, China

Jun 2022 - Sep 2022

The Every Voice Coalition

Development Fellow

Boston, MA

Jun 2021 - Sep 2021

Service

Intercollegiate U.S.-China Journal

Managing Editor

Oct 2022 - Jan 2024

SYMPH Chinese Students Association

Co-President

Jan 2022 - Jan 2024

Skills

Languages: English (native), Mandarin (native), Cantonese (limited working), French (limited working)

Programming: R, Stata, Python