

ISABELLE DESISTO

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ACADEMIC INTERESTS

I focus broadly on the politics of Eastern Europe and Eurasia. I am interested primarily in questions related to repression (including censorship, propaganda, and violence) and education policy, particularly in authoritarian contexts. Recently, I have been working with colleagues at Princeton and other universities to study attitudes toward the war in Ukraine among Russians living both in Russia and abroad.

EDUCATION

Princeton University

- Ph.D., Politics (expected graduation: 2026).
- Subfields: comparative politics, post-communist politics, quantitative methods.

University of Cambridge

- MPhil, Politics and International Studies, *with distinction* (2021).
- Advisor: Ayse Zarakol
- Thesis: "Explaining Divergent Foreign Aid Flows to Belarusian and Ukrainian Children After the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster, 1986 – 2011."

Harvard University

- M.A., Regional Studies: Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia (2020).
- B.A., Government, *summa cum laude* (2020). Secondary field in Spanish and certificate in Latin American Studies.
- Advisor: George Soroka
- Thesis: "From the 'Island of Freedom' to the Iron Curtain: Rethinking the Role of Soft Power in Soviet-Cuban Educational Exchange Programs."

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- Ongoing projects include: Public opinion surveys tracking Russian attitudes toward the war in Ukraine; meta-analysis of Russian social media data to evaluate emotional reactions to the war; using survey data and archival documents to study effects of education policy on political attitudes in eastern Europe; digitizing and analyzing census data from inter-war Ukraine.
- Research assistant for: Jennifer Widner, Princeton University (2022); Alisha Holland, Harvard University (2020); Alexandra Vacroux, Harvard University (2018 & 2020); George Soroka, Harvard University (2017).
- Fieldwork: Moldova (2022, 2 months); Russia (2019, 1.5 months); Cuba (2019, 2 months); Kyrgyzstan (2018, 2 months); Armenia (2017, 2 months).

¹Updated August 17, 2022

PUBLICATIONS

1. **Expectations Versus Reality: Cuban Students' Encounters with Late Soviet Socialism.** Forthcoming in *Cahiers du monde russe*.

I have also published several book reviews, blog posts, and other popular writing. See my website (isabelledesisto.com) for further details.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

7. "Healing the Nuclear Family: Explaining Variation in Foreign Aid to Chernobyl Children." ASEES Convention, December 3, 2021.
6. "Healing the Nuclear Family: Explaining Variation in States' Foreign Aid Programs for Chernobyl Victims." Council for European Studies, June 23, 2021.
5. "Healing the Nuclear Family: Explaining Variation in States' Foreign Aid Programs for Chernobyl Victims." MPSA, April 16, 2021.
4. "Rethinking the Role of Soft Power in Soviet-Cuban Student Exchanges." MPSA, April 15, 2021.
3. "When Expectations Meet Reality: The Complex Dynamics of Soviet-Cuban Educational Exchange Programs." ASEES Convention, November 6, 2020.
2. "Atoms for Autonomy: Explaining the Cuban reaction to the Chernobyl nuclear accident." Conference of the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, August 15, 2020.
1. "Atoms for Autonomy: Explaining the Cuban reaction to the Chernobyl nuclear accident." The Taras Shevchenko Conference for Ukrainian Studies, Indiana University, March 7, 2020.

FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS

- Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Summer Funding (Princeton University, 2022). \$3000.
- Data-Driven Social Science initiative small grant (Princeton University, 2022). \$4550.
- Centennial Fellowship (Princeton University, 2021 - Present).
- ASEES Graduate Student Travel Grant (Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, 2021). \$500. *Declined due to COVID-19.*
- Rouse-Ball Fund Grant (Trinity College, Cambridge, 2021). 150GBP.
- Eben Fiske Studentship (Trinity College, Cambridge, 2020-2021). Full tuition.
- Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Scholarship (Harvard University, 2020). \$6,680.
- David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies Summer Research Travel Grant (Harvard University, 2019). \$3000.
- Goldman Undergraduate Research Travel Grant (Harvard University, 2017 & 2019). \$2500 & \$4000.
- Government Department Chair's Undergraduate International Research and Travel Fellowship (Harvard University, 2019). \$750 & \$2000.
- Weissman International Internship Program Grant (Harvard University, 2018). \$5500.
- Institute of Politics Summer Stipend (Harvard University, 2017). \$1500.

AWARDS

- Jorge Pérez-López Student Award Competition 3rd Prize Graduate Award (Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 2020).
- Sophia Freund Prize (Harvard University, 2020).
- Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize (Harvard University, 2020).
- James R. and Isabel D. Hammond Prize in Latin American Studies (Harvard University, 2020).
- Gerda Richards Crosby Prize (Harvard University, 2020).
- Government Department Thesis Symposium Audience Prize (Harvard University, 2020).
- Runner-up in All the Russias Graduate Student Essay Competition (NYU Jordan Center, 2020).
- Charles Joseph Bonaparte Prize (Harvard University, 2019).
- Phi Beta Kappa, Junior 24 (Harvard University, 2019).
- John Harvard Scholar (Harvard University, 2017 & 2018).
- National Post-Secondary Russian Essay Contest – Bronze Medalist (American Council of Teachers of Russian, 2017).

RESEARCH SKILLS

- Languages: Russian (fluent), Spanish (fluent), Ukrainian (advanced), Romanian (beginner).
- Technical: RStudio, LaTeX, ArcGIS
- Other: NVivo, elite interviews, archival research