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Carla Freeman directs the SAIS Foreign Policy Institute and is concurrently associate research professor in China Studies. She conducts research on Chinese foreign and domestic policy with a current focus on regional dynamics, including China and its periphery, nontraditional security, and China's role in international organizations. Her career has included leadership as an Asian analyst for a political risk consultancy, directing the program in civil society and community sustainability at the Johnson Foundation, and various academic positions.

Professor Freeman received a Ph.D. in international relations and Asian Studies from Johns Hopkins SAIS, where she also completed a master's in international economics and China Studies. She completed her B.A. in history and Southeast Asian studies with honors at Yale University and earned a certificate in political studies with honors from Sciences Po in Paris. Her current research is on China and the global commons, China's foreign policy toward its neighbors, and China's nontraditional security.