

**SAIS
WELCOMES**

**HAL
BRANDS**

**FRANCIS
GAVIN**

SAIS welcomes two distinguished professors and policy practitioners who will engage in scholarship and policy analysis at the new Henry J. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs.



Jordyn Arndt,
first year Dean's
Fellow and MA

candidate specializing in American foreign policy, interviewed both scholars about their work, their expectations for the center, and how it will impact Johns Hopkins SAIS and beyond.

ARNDT: *You are the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs Distinguished Professor at SAIS. What does your new position mean to you?*

BRANDS: It is a fantastic opportunity. I am thrilled to be here at SAIS, and the Kissinger Center is a uniquely exciting initiative. It offers really interesting opportunities to work at the nexus of academia and policy and to interact with SAIS' existing interdisciplinary community. The center is, obviously, just getting off the ground, but I think there is every reason to have high hopes for what it will eventually become. I think it will serve as a resource for the entire SAIS community and create synergies with the great strengths that SAIS already possesses.

ARNDT: *Your recent book, What Good is Grand Strategy: Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush, offers a historical perspective of statecraft's successes and challenges. What would be your recommendations for the next administration?*

BRANDS: The key is really to take the discipline of grand strategy seriously. When I think of grand strategy, I think of a deliberate approach to foreign policy that involves formulating key concepts about what your nation seeks to achieve in the world and how you might actually get there. So grand strategy isn't a roadmap with all the twists and turns plotted in advance. It is more of a body of ideas that helps you to set a general course in global affairs and adapt to the inevitable surprises and shocks that happen along the way.

I think that the only way that grand strategy works well is if you take the time at the onset of an administration to think seriously about what it is that you want to achieve and where you want to be four or eight years from now. The reason you need to do it at the beginning of an administration is that once the wheels of government get churning, and once you get drawn into day-to-day crisis management, it is exceedingly hard to find the time and the strategic bandwidth to pull back and ask those first-order questions. So you have to do it right at the onset when there is still a lot of intellectual capital in the administration and you can actually take some time to focus on these bigger issues.

ARNDT: *As a scholar of American statecraft, what impact do you hope to have on the next generation of Johns Hopkins SAIS students?*

BRANDS: One of the attractions of coming to SAIS is that the student body here is just enormously impressive. The students obviously have fantastic academic qualifications but, in addition to that, they also have significant life experience and work

experience. In many cases, some folks have worked as part of the policy process or in the broader DC policy community before. And many of them will go back there afterwards. There is very little that I or anyone else can do during someone's two years at SAIS to prepare them for the specific policy challenges or the specific professional challenges they are going to face in 15 years. What we hope to do is give them ways of thinking through problems rigorously and systematically, putting those problems in a strategic framework and, thereby, giving them a better professional or analytical toolkit for working on things down the road.

Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs. He is the author or editor of several books, including Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order (2016), and What Good is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush (2014). He was a Council on Foreign Relations International Affairs Fellow from 2015 to 2016 and has consulted with a range of government offices and agencies in the intelligence and national security communities, and the RAND Corporation.

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GAVIN

ARNDT: *You are the Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the director of the Kissinger Center. Why do you believe Johns Hopkins SAIS is an ideal location in which to carry out this work?*

GAVIN: SAIS has long been seen as the leading academic institution for training global policy leaders. The center will provide SAIS students with critical skills and a historical lens that other institutions don't emphasize, thereby helping

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them to become better leaders. In Washington, students' access to leaders will add to their advantage and better prepare them upon graduation.

ARNDT: *Your book, Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age, finds that the historical origins of our nuclear world are deeply consequential for contemporary policy. How can the next administration integrate a historical perspective into policymaking?*

GAVIN: One of the great things historians can do is to provide background to the world we live in. This knowledge is usually not at the forefront of policymaking due to a lack of awareness. This is why I'm passionate about history and policymaking. When policymakers are aware of history and how the past works, it helps them to make wiser decisions. I think the next administration would benefit from looking to the past for lessons.

In the nuclear world, there is a big divide between those who advocate for moving toward nuclear armament and those who worry about the power of nuclear armament to destabilize global security. These two sides rarely agree. Taking a historical approach could show the origins of both and allow you to generate the best aspects of each and avoid the downsides. By using historical knowledge, you can better understand why a certain position was taken.

ARNDT: *Why is it important to bring a historical perspective into the policy and practice of international relations—and what does it mean for the Kissinger Center?*

GAVIN: History and studying the past provide you with insights you wouldn't obtain

in other subjects. It helps you to understand the importance of complexity, context, unintended consequences, and multiple perspectives. Very rarely do policymakers face binary choices. The way a policymaker looks at the world is not unlike how a historian looks at the world. There are very few right answers. Every solution to a problem generates three more problems. A historical analysis helps to sensitize you to uncertainty and diverse perspectives and deeply enriches your ability to make decisions.

If you talk to most policymakers, they will agree that history is important for policymaking. Of all the opportunities that the university offers, learning history is one of the most important. It is far more important than what students often think they should be learning. This belief is central to training the next generation of leaders. This is something that other schools don't highlight. Former Secretary of State Kissinger thinks that it is vital. I believe it is long overdue. You will see after the center gains recognition, other institutions will want to follow suit. That is what is so exciting about it.

Francis Gavin is the Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the director of the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs. He is the author of celebrated books on global affairs, including Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958–1971 (2004) and Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age (2012). From 2005 to 2010, he led The Next Generation Project: U.S. Global Policy and the Future of International Institutions at The American Assembly. Gavin is a fellow at the Nobel Institute, the Center for a New American Security, and other research institutes.