

Book Review of *Genesis: Artificial Intelligence, Hope, and the Human Spirit*

When AI Forces Humanity to Reconsider Itself

Jai Kinger

Student, AISSMS Polytechnic

Kshitij Taluja

Undergraduate Researcher, Bachelor of Computer Science, Golden Gate University

Dr. Smrite Goudhaman

Global Professor of Practice, Golden Gate University

Author(s): Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Craig Mundie

Title: *Genesis: Artificial Intelligence, Hope, and the Human Spirit*

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company

Publication year: 2024

ISBN: 978-0-316-58132-5

Pages: 288

Abstract

Genesis: Artificial Intelligence, Hope, and the Human Spirit treats artificial intelligence (AI) as an evolutionary development for humanity, not merely as another technology. Ranging across the history of discovery, politics, national security, economic prosperity, scientific inquiry, and human purpose, Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Craig Mundie argue that AI will alter the context within which humans exercise judgment, power, and responsibility. This review holds that the book's central weakness is a recurring slide from technical possibility to confident prediction, particularly in its economic and security chapters, where claims about AI's future capabilities outrun the evidence supplied. Reading *Genesis* against the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology's AI Risk Management Framework and Lazcoz and de Hert's analysis of human accountability under EU law, the review finds the book's call for oversight, restraint, and accountability directionally right but institutionally thin. *Genesis* is best read as a framework for thinking about AI as a transformation of human agency rather than as a policy manual.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; AI governance; geopolitics; human judgment; technological change; strategy; explainability

Genesis: Artificial Intelligence, Hope, and the Human Spirit offers a distinct view of artificial intelligence. Instead of focusing on capability, what machines can do, how fast they can accomplish it, and where those capabilities will lead, Henry A. Kissinger, Eric Schmidt, and Craig J. Mundie explore what happens to human society when machines begin participating in discovery, interpretation, strategic judgments, and scientific research. The result is a book that

covers a wide range of topics including history, philosophy, geopolitics, economics, science, and strategy. This breadth is *Genesis*'s biggest strength and greatest weakness. The book excels when encouraging readers to rethink assumptions about human decision-making; however, its credibility wanes when confidence about future technological advances outpaces available evidence.

The authors' own biographies are inseparable from the book's argument and worth stating plainly. Kissinger served as U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and taught government at Harvard for two decades before entering government; Schmidt was chairman and chief executive officer of Google; and Mundie spent more than two decades at Microsoft, retiring as chief research and strategy officer (Kirkus Reviews, 2024). This is a book by insiders of the very institutions (great-power diplomacy and Big Tech), whose judgment the book asks readers to trust. That background lends *Genesis* genuine authority on how governments and firms behave under uncertainty, but it also means the authors have little institutional distance from the technology industry they are evaluating, a tension the book itself never quite acknowledges.

Genesis is divided into three sections. Section One, "In the Beginning," addresses discovery, the brain, and reality. Section Two focuses on politics, security, prosperity, and science. Section Three deals with strategy. The structure is telling: AI is presented not as another technological advancement but as an intellectual force capable of reshaping the institutions through which humans understand the world and coordinate collective action. The authors emphasize that previous technologies opened new possibilities without altering how humans acted as interpreters and decision-makers. AI, however, may challenge this separation by generating output based on parameters, finding patterns in vast data, and assisting in types of reasoning previously thought uniquely human (Kissinger et al., 2024).

Where Possibility Becomes Prediction

Genesis's central methodological weakness is not that it speculates (a book asking readers to imagine unfamiliar futures has little choice), but that it frequently narrates speculation in the grammar of prediction rather than possibility. Three examples illustrate the pattern. First, discussing economic transformation, the authors suggest AI could soon generate cheap synthetic substitutes for scarce physical resources such as oil and gas, with little discussion of the manufacturing, energy, and materials-science constraints such substitution would require (Publishers Weekly, 2024). Second, the book raises AI-driven genome editing as a route to

meaningfully extending human lifespans, stated as a near-term possibility rather than a contested and distant one (Publishers Weekly, 2024). Third, in the security chapters, the authors move from the defensible observation that AI could be weaponized against digital infrastructure to the stronger, less qualified claim that opaque machine reasoning could push societies back toward accepting authority they cannot explain. This is a striking historical analogy, asserted rather than demonstrated (Publishers Weekly, 2024). Reviewers with technical AI backgrounds have made a related criticism from the opposite direction: several of the book's descriptive claims about what contemporary systems can and cannot do were already dated by publication. The gap between the drafting of the manuscript and Kissinger's death in 2023 compounds the problem (Bayesian Investor Blog, 2024). Kirkus Reviews likewise credits the book's authority while flagging its reliance on assertion over evidence (Kirkus Reviews, 2024).

The chapters on politics and security demonstrate why AI cannot be treated merely as a technical issue. The authors argue that AI will affect strategic decision-making, diplomatic relations, warfare, and the distribution of power among nations. Their central concern is not that autonomous systems might become weapons, but that machine-generated analyses could change the timing, scale, and epistemological demands of decisions, which is why *Genesis* advocates preserving human judgment even as AI gains importance in strategic contexts (Kissinger et al., 2024).

Beyond Politics and Security: Economy, Science, and Philosophy

The economic chapters, though thinner than the security chapters, deserve more attention than the book gives them. The authors argue that AI will reshape employment and the distribution of wealth faster than existing institutions are built to absorb, generating productivity gains alongside the risk of job displacement and widening inequality. This is among the book's more empirically grounded arguments, since labor-market disruption from automation is already measurable. *Genesis* nonetheless stops short of proposing concrete transition mechanisms such as retraining infrastructure or social insurance. Such mechanisms would let the reader distinguish the authors' economic diagnosis from their far shakier prediction that AI-derived material substitutes will ease resource scarcity.

On science, *Genesis* is on firmer ground. The authors describe AI as an emerging research partner capable of navigating data and hypothesis spaces beyond unaided human capacity, a claim consistent with recent AI Index reporting documenting AI's expanding role in scientific

discovery and medicine (Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, 2025). The chapter nonetheless remains underdeveloped relative to its promise: the authors gesture at AI-accelerated science without grappling with reproducibility, automation bias in interpreting AI-generated hypotheses, or who bears responsibility when an AI-assisted discovery proves wrong.

The philosophical thread running through *Genesis*, namely what happens to human autonomy, meaning, and self-understanding when machines participate in judgment once reserved for people, is arguably the book's most original contribution, and the one it develops least systematically. The authors return repeatedly to the idea that AI will test human dignity and free will, but the argument surfaces in fragments across chapters rather than as a sustained philosophical position (Bildirici, 2025). Readers coming from philosophy of mind or ethics are likely to find the treatment suggestive rather than rigorous, and this thinness is a fair criticism of the book's breadth-over-depth approach rather than a sign the topic was ignored.

Developing the Governance Argument

Genesis's abstract promises a distinct contribution to the study of how governments should govern AI, but the book largely gestures at governance rather than building an argument for it. Its clearest governance content is a repeated insistence on four principles: human oversight, individual and institutional responsibility, technological restraint, and accountability for AI-assisted decisions. These principles align closely with the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology's AI Risk Management Framework, which organizes AI governance around comparable functions: Govern, Map, Measure, and Manage, and treats human oversight as a cross-cutting requirement rather than an afterthought (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2023). Where the NIST framework operationalizes oversight into testable practices, such as documented risk tolerances, ongoing monitoring, and defined escalation paths, *Genesis* states the value of oversight without specifying who exercises it, over which decisions, or with what recourse when it fails.

The same gap appears when *Genesis* is read against Lazcoz and de Hert's analysis of human accountability under the EU's GDPR and AI Act. They argue that meaningful human oversight requires naming a specific accountable person or institution for each automated decision, not just a general commitment to keeping humans "in the loop" (Lazcoz & de Hert, 2023). *Genesis*'s language of restraint and responsibility is compatible with this account but does not go as far: it never specifies who would be accountable when an AI-assisted military or

diplomatic judgment goes wrong. The book's governance contribution is therefore best understood as agenda-setting rather than institution-building; it names the right problem without designing the answer.

Decision Tempo and Explainability

Genesis is more concrete on a related but narrower point: the tempo of high-stakes decisions. The authors argue convincingly that AI will not only inform decisions but compress the time available to make them, so that leaders gain access to more data and less time to interrogate it. This has a direct explainability dimension the book identifies but underdevelops: decision-makers receiving AI-generated assessments may lack the time, and sometimes the technical grounding, to evaluate the reasoning behind them; a problem the explainable-AI literature has documented well outside the geopolitical contexts *Genesis* focuses on. The book's preferred remedy, keeping a human "in the loop," is the same phrase used across defense and policy circles. *Genesis* does not engage with the growing critique that such requirements can become symbolic rather than substantive when humans are handed AI output they have neither the time nor the technical means to assess independently.

Conclusion

Overall, *Genesis* shines when treating AI as a question of human purpose rather than technological novelty, and it is stronger across its full range (security, economics, science, and philosophy) than a narrow focus on any single chapter would suggest. Its speculative sections should be approached cautiously, but its central warning deserves serious attention: societies can amass extraordinary technical power faster than they build the institutions needed to govern it. That argument, stated plainly in the book's conclusion, is exactly the gap this review has traced through the governance chapters. *Genesis* names the mismatch between technical power and institutional capacity. As the comparison with the NIST AI RMF and Lazcoz and de Hert makes clear, it stops short of building the accountable, oversight-based institutions its own conclusion calls for. What it offers is not a policy manual but a framework for thinking about AI as a transformation of human agency.

Genesis is best suited to general readers, policymakers, and students of international affairs or technology policy seeking an accessible, if uneven, entry point into how AI reshapes power and judgment; readers wanting a technical treatment of AI capabilities or a rigorous governance blueprint should look elsewhere. For practitioners such as policymakers, technology executives, and institutional leaders, the book's most actionable takeaway is not any single

prediction but its diagnosis. Organizations deploying high-stakes AI systems should name a specific accountable person for each category of AI-assisted decision, document the human-oversight mechanism before deployment rather than after, and treat compressed decision tempo as a risk to be managed rather than an inevitability to be accepted. Read this way, *Genesis* is less a prediction of the future and more an argument about the kind of judgment humanity will require if it aims to shape the future rather than passively inherit it.

References

- Bayesian Investor Blog. (2024, December 31). *Genesis* [Review of the book *Genesis: Artificial intelligence, hope, and the human spirit*, by H. A. Kissinger, E. Schmidt, & C. Mundie]. <https://bayesianinvestor.com/blog/index.php/2024/12/31/genesis/>
- Bildirici, F. (2025, January 22). *Genesis: Artificial intelligence, hope, and the human spirit* — review. LSE Review of Books. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2025/01/22/book-review-genesis-artificial-intelligence-hope-and-the-human-spirit-henry-a-kissinger-eric-schmidt-craig-mundie/>
- Kirkus Reviews. (2024, November 19). *Genesis: Artificial intelligence, hope, and the human spirit*. <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/henry-kissinger/genesis-7/>
- Kissinger, H. A., Schmidt, E., & Mundie, C. (2024). *Genesis: Artificial intelligence, hope, and the human spirit*. Little, Brown and Company.
- Lazcoz, G., & de Hert, P. (2023). Humans in the GDPR and AIA governance of automated and algorithmic systems: Essential pre-requisites against abdicating responsibilities. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 50, 105833. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clsr.2023.105833>
- National Institute of Standards and Technology. (2023). *Artificial intelligence risk management framework (AI RMF 1.0)*. U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.AI.100-1>
- Publishers Weekly. (2024). *Genesis: Artificial intelligence, hope, and the human spirit* [Review]. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/9780316581295>
- Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. (2025). *AI index report 2025*. Stanford University. <https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report>