

Editor's Note

Response to Friedman's "The World Before Corona and the World After": A Perspective Raging From the Development of Civilization to the Harmony of East and West, and the Paradigm Shift

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Thomas L. Friedman's "Our New Historic Divide: B.C. and A.C. — The World Before Corona and the World After" column is becoming the talk of the times. Whoever talks about the post-Corona world mentions "BC/AC" as a new concept. However, people seem to be overusing the term "BC/AC" while overlooking the specific context that Friedman emphasized. So, taking into account the cultural differences and contexts of the East and the West highlighted in Friedman's column, we devised the "BC/AC" ten-paradigm hypothesis. We hope these ten cultural shifts will be the first step in examining the post-Corona world.

Keywords: Coronavirus, Corona-19, Division, BC/AC, Turning Points, Thomas L. Friedman

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1. Introduction

Corona is becoming a turning point in our history. This little virus is making a big change: breaking the interconnected and interdependent world. One of the notable changes can be found in our languages. For example, “self-isolating,” “pandemic,” “quarantine,” “lockdown” and “key workers” have increased in use (Lawson, 2020, para 3.). Additionally, new terminologies such as “covidiot” (someone who ignores public health advice), “coveideo party” (online parties via Zoom or Skype), and “covexit” (the strategy for exiting a lockdown) (Lawson, 2020, para 4) have come into use. Lawson (2020) concludes that this type of linguistic creativity reflects how people gather to talk about new challenges and contexts, and emphasized that understanding the language surrounding it will be ever important.

Friedman’s column, “Our New Historical Divide: B.C. and A.C.—the World Before Corona and the World After,” pointed out that the Coronavirus brought enormous changes to our society: unknown unknowns, the power of exponentials, and the upside of exponentials (Friedman 2020). After his column, the term B.C.A.C. (before Corona and after Corona) has become one of the buzzwords. It is concerning that people are overusing such jargon without considering the full context behind Corona. At this moment, we should ask two important questions: 1. Is corona a turning point in history?; and 2. What are the greatest turning points in history? Against this backdrop, we attempt to work out an “BC/AC” *ten-paradigm hypothesis* based on the ten most important turning points in Eastern and Western civilizations with different cultural values and consequences (Danowski & Park, 2020), as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

A newly proposed *B.C. and A.C. — The World Before Corona and the World After*

Stage	What may stand for the initial “C”?	Period	Characteristic (in English)	Characteristic (in Korean)
1	Confucius	551-479 BC	Virtue and oriental humanism	덕치와 동양적 인본주의
2	Christ	c.4 BC- c.AD 30/33	Western-centered religious domination	서구 중심의 종교적 지배
3	Columbus	1492	The beginning of liberal capitalism	자유 자본주의 시작

4	Corea	16th Century	Korean Peninsula Exposed to the West	서구에 노출된 한반도
5	Copernicus	17th Century	The time of conflict between religion and science	종교와 과학의 갈등시기
6	Cholera	19th Century	Start of the public health system	공중보건 시스템의 시작
7	Cold War	1947-1991	Ideological confrontation and military competition	이념대결과 군사경쟁
8	Computer Networks	1990s	Internet-mediated globalization	인터넷으로 매개된 글로벌화
9	Cryptocurrency	2010s	Transition to a decentralized society	탈중앙화 사회로 전환
10	Covid-19	2020s	Accelerating non-face-to-face digital ecosystem with interpersonal avoidance	위축성 대인회피주의와 함께 비대면 디지털 생태계 가속화

2.1. Confucius (551-479 BC)

Confucius, also called Kongzi or Master Kong, was a Chinese political philosopher during the Spring and Autumn period. His philosophy is known as Confucianism, and his moral teachings were compiled in the *Analects (Lunyu)*. Confucianism has had a profound impact on Chinese politics and foreign policy (Zhao, 2018). This philosophy has also had broad impact on the globe. Many Europeans viewed Confucius' teachings in line with rationalism and humanism (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020). He also emphasized ruling with virtues through the gentleman's (*junzi*) five behaviors central to the *Analects* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020): (benevolence *ren*, righteousness

yi, ritual propriety *li*, wisdom *zhi* and trustworthiness *xin*). His moral teachings secularized and modernized citizens' perceptions (Csikszentmihalyi, 2020).

2.2. Christ (c. 4 BC-c.AD 30/33)

Christianity had a great impact on the modernization of Europe and America (Csikszentmihalyi 2020). Europeans recognize the birth of Jesus as being a turning point; for instance, a dividing line of history (B.C—Before Christ to A.D.—Anno Domini, in the year of the lord). Christianity became a cultural root of Western civilization and spread further up to Africa, the Americas, and parts of Asia. (Kurtz, 2016). Christians remain the world's largest religious group (Hackett & McClendon, 2017).

2.3. Columbus' First Voyage (1492)

Cristopher Columbus (*Cristoforo Colombo* in Italian) is believed to have been born in Genoa, Italy in 1451 (History, n.d.). Opening the age of discovery (during the 15th and 16th Centuries), European rulers believed that exploring undiscovered lands would bring enormous benefits such as property and territory. In about 1420, small Portuguese caravels travelled along the African Coast and successfully reached Asia. Upon return, they brought spices, gold, slaves and other valuable goods from Asia to Europe (History, n.d.). To reach Asia, Columbus had a different idea from Portuguese sailors—crossing the Atlantic Ocean (History, n.d.). With the support of Spanish rulers, he sailed across the Atlantic in his three ships, the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria, and discovered the Americas. His trip initiated European conquests of America which is marked as the turning point in world history (Hoffman, 2015). From 1492 on, European nations created colonies and established their empires to extend their influence beyond their inhabited continent. Up until the outbreak of World War 1 (1914), 84 per cent of the world fell under the European influence (Hoffman, 2015). Columbian conquests led to the age of European colonialism and imperialism and subsequently initiated liberal capitalism (Stuchetey, 2011). Also, his conquests gave rise to globalization (Stuchetey, 2011).

2.4. Korea (16C)

At the turn of the 16th Century, in 1543, the initial Europe-Asia encounter was made between Portugal and Japan (Yonemoto, 2005). Gregorio de Céspedes, a Spanish Jesuit Priest to Japan, was the first person who landed his foot on the Korean peninsula in 1592 when Japan invaded Joseon (former name of Korea) (Bang, 2015). His mission was the pastoral care of Japanese Christians deployed in Joseon (Bang, 2015). His Jesuit mission to Korea is understood in the broader context of Spanish colonial expansion (Bang, 2015). By the middle of the 19th Century, when European powers advanced to East and Southeast Asia, Joseon was fully exposed to Europe and America (Bae, 2007).

2.5. Copernican Revolution (17C)

The Copernican Revolution was the paradigm shift in the field of astronomy from a geocentric model (having the earth at the center of the universe) to a heliocentric model (having the sun at the center of the universe) (Spencer, 2020). This revolution was articulated by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus. This shift established the foundation of modern science, which later became an independent and thriving discipline (Spencer, 2020, para 1). The impact of this revolution seemed to be the birth of conflicts between religion and science. Peters (2017) pointed out the public today continues to believe that “science and religion are engaged in a hopelessly unwinnable war.” (p. 11)

2.6. Cholera (19C)

Throughout history, Cholera outbreaks seriously affected people all over the world (World Health Organization n.d.). Examples can be found in records from Hippocrates (460-377 BC) and Galen (129-216 AD) (World Health Organization, n.d.). The first cholera pandemic originated in 1817 in India and spread to other parts of the world (World Health Organization, n.d.). Koch’s discovery of the *Vibrio cholerae* (the causative bacterium of the disease) led to the confirmation of the contagion theory (Pollitzer, 1959). Cholera raised the awareness and importance of hygiene and sanitization (World Health Organization, n.d.). The 1848 Public Health Act of the UK was established to improve the sanitary condition of laboring populations, and it paved the road to improved public health (UK Parliament, n.d.).

2.7. Cold War (1947-1991)

The Cold War was a fierce rivalry for world supremacy between the United States and the Soviet Union from the end of World War II to the end of the Soviet Union (Britannica, n.d.). The climax of the Cold War was in 1948-1953. During this period, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed between the US and its European allies to resist the Soviet presence in Europe (Britannica n.d.). In 1949, the Soviet Union exploded its first autonomic warhead. In 1950, the Soviets supported North Korea’s invasion of US-supported South Korea (Britannica, n.d.). The Korean War lasted until 1953, and Korea was divided into two parts; they are currently under an armistice. Subsequently, the US and the Soviet Union went on to the Space Race of the 1950s and 1960s (Excell, 2017). In October 1957, the Soviets launched the first artificial earth satellite called *Sputnik-1*. In January 1958, the US launched its first satellite called Explorer-1. Subsequently, the Soviet Union put the first man in space (Yuriy Gagarin) in 1961, and the US the first man on the moon (Neil Armstrong and Apollo 11) in 1969 (Excell, 2017). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War came to an end. However, the Cold War left an enormous impact on the international system such as the conflicts rooted in bipolar conflict (the EU and Russia) and instability in the world’s hotspots (from the Korean peninsula to Afghanistan) (Zancheta, 2016).

2.8. Computer Networks/Internet (1990s)

The Internet came to the world in the 1970s as a data networking system like the NPL network and Merit Network. However, the Internet became well-known after the creation of the World Wide Web (WWW) by Tim Berners-Lee in 1990. (Dennis, 2020). The Internet has revolutionized every aspect of human behavior such as information, communications and methods of commerce (Dennis, 2020). More than half of the world's population (approximately 4.5 billion) has access to the Internet (Dennis, 2020). The Internet established the communication forum where big or small countries could easily exchange their cultures, news, entertainment and even propaganda with those who are interested (University of Minnesota, 2016). The Internet has become a major determinant of globalization in recent years (University of Minnesota, 2016). On the downside, the Internet can be an online forum filled with unwanted, unreliable and harmful information (Barnett et al., 2017; University of Minnesota, 2016).

2.9. Cryptocurrency (2010s)

Cryptocurrency is digital money (Federal Trade Commission, n.d.). Bitcoin is one of the popular examples, but “new cryptocurrencies continue to be created.” (Federal Trade Commission, n.d. para 1.; Park & Lee, 2019). Cryptocurrencies are under a decentralized control system which is the opposite of a central banking (Allison, 2015). It is likely to be a sign of transition from a centralized society to a decentralized one (Park & Park, 2020). Decentralization has become an extensively-used term, “particularly in discourses surrounding the internet” (Schneider, 2019, p. 265). The term decentralization had become a popular jargon among the blockchain technology advocates, and it has been gaining popularity among participants in political and technological projects (Schneider, 2019). Since the decentralization is still an obscure concept, it needs further theorizing and continuing definition (Schneider, 2019). Finally, cryptocurrency gave us a fresh look into formulating future social arrangements and related technology (Park & Ozel, 2019).

2.10. Corona/COVID-19 (2020s~)

The Coronavirus pandemic has transformed the way we live. For instance, people became more tech-dependent in every aspect of our lives (Park, Park, & Choung, 2020). People will work more flexibly due to increased use of teleworks (BBC, n.d.; Park, 2020ab). Fewer transports led to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions (BBC, n.d.). In other words, the coronavirus replaced real connections with virtual ones in human society. As the pandemic continues, this physical virus may cause an emotional pandemic based on anxiety (Kluger, 2020). It is quite concerning that the emotional pandemic caused by the coronavirus might accelerate social phobia and anxiety among the general public.

3. Conclusion

In a response to Friedman's popular note on the Coronavirus pandemic, we made an attempt to uncover the ten most vital historical turning points in light of the abbreviated initial "C". To greater or lesser degrees, all events led to a new standard for human beings. The impacts derived from major changes are significant for building the context of contemporary society. The most noticeable impact of these changes could be globalization (the spread of Christianity, European influence, the Internet and hegemonic competition). Behind globalization, global cooperation has always been neglected. Bill Gates emphasized the significance of global co-operation as a proper response to the Coronavirus pandemic recently (TED, 2020). Regardless of the situation, nation-states are not likely to be prepared for a global consensus in public health (e.g. President Trump's defunding of WHO). Park and Ozel (2019) expect that there may be a shift from Western-based hegemony to a multipolar decentralization. They implied the significance of establishing networks among nation-states at the current stage. From their work, the importance of the Eastern world (e.g. Asian countries) should be recognized. Bill Gates also praised the South Korean government's COVID-19 testing system (TED, 2020). Furthermore, future studies may be able to find some helpful benchmarking cases for building a global platform for cooperation in the areas of the public health.

This study suggested a *"BC/AC" ten-paradigm hypothesis* to re-iterate the importance of understanding our world. This understanding should not be based on human impulses but profound impact and perpetual lessons. With this hypothesis, we hope to find further helpful insights to tackle complex global issues. However, this hypothesis needs to be substantiated by additional research. It is hoped that this hypothesis can provide an impetus for viewing the world after COVID-19 pandemic.

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