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Once COVID-19 is Contained: Visioning What's Next For Offices and White Collar Businesses

When you push a pause button on a computer, it shuts down. When you push a pause button on a human, as is occurring now in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic gripping most of the world, we do not rest. We think, refresh, imagine, and try to adapt to a new world order once the pandemic abates. Darwin surmised that it is not necessarily the strongest or smartest that survive. Rather, the survivors succeed in being flexible and adapting to new environments. Zhou Enlai, when asked by Henry Kissinger what impact the French Revolution had on China, reflected "it's too soon to tell." Given the pressing necessity to re-connect our lives and economies, while at the same time staying healthy and safe, we do not have the luxury to reflect. Rather, we must plan for a future that is being quickly thrust upon us, or existing trends accelerated, at warp speed. This article imagines how that new world order might impact our office's finance department. The survivors will successfully be flexible and adapt.

A recent paper on fifteen major pandemics and armed conflicts since the thirteenth century postulated that the major after-effects of those events lasted over forty years. Real rates of return were more substantially depressed during the period ravaged by pandemics, more so than due to wars, due to the significant precautions and adjustments business and society took after pandemics but not after wars. The postulate is that after wars, most countries just rebuild and, while they may have changed institutional frameworks, do not reassess ways of doing business and conducting their day to day lives.

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