

CHINA CROSSROADS

Monday, February 2nd, 2026, 19:30 – 21:00

A Century of Plenty: Drivers of Material Progress over 100 Years and a “World of Plenty” by 2100

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This talk is based on [A Century of Plenty](#) (2026), a major research effort from the McKinsey Global Institute which explores the advances of the past century and what drove them—what we call the progress machine. It then investigates the possibility of a world of plenty by 2100 in which every person lives at, or above, the levels of prosperity enjoyed by Switzerland today. Such a future would require the global economy to be eight times bigger than it is today. Is this realistic? Will we have enough energy, food, metals and minerals? Can we keep innovating quickly enough? Can we deliver plenty while protecting our planet? We ran the numbers, and the answer is yes. But progress is a choice. Making what is possible probable needs a new narrative. A story in which growth is good, plenty is achievable, and people are inspired to innovate and build. Again and again, optimists have been on the right side of history. We believe they will be once more.

[Nick Leung](#) is Director of the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). He was McKinsey's Greater China Chairman from 2010 to 2022. With locations in Beijing, Chengdu, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Taipei, the Greater China office is McKinsey's largest in Asia and since 2018 has also been one of the firm's regional hubs, alongside Europe and North America. Nick is of mixed Chinese-Swiss heritage and joined the firm's Zurich office in 1992 before transferring to Hong Kong in 1997. Before McKinsey, he was with UBS based in Zurich. After that, Nick led the firm's Asian Strategy & Corporate Finance Practice until 2008, focused on cross-border M&A. From 2009 until 2017, he was based in the Beijing office serving multinationals and Chinese private and state-owned enterprises in China and abroad. Having spent more than three decades at McKinsey, Nick has served a range of global and Chinese companies in various sectors including financial institutions, industrials, infrastructure, logistics, and principal investors. In his tenure as head of Greater China, Nick oversaw the tripling of the firm's presence in Greater China, the opening of two new branch locations, and the election of over 70 new Chinese partners. A frequent speaker at external events and conferences, he is an adjunct professor with the Tsinghua University's School of Economic and Management, and hosts a regular podcast, McKinsey on China, with more than two million downloads.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a "crossroads" of the world and itself at a "crossroads" in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.