From “Made in China” to “Create in China”

从“中国制造”到“中国智造”

In late September 2022, I went to visit a famous entrepreneur in Zhongguancun. I entered his office complex' from the back door. Mistakenly, I took the wrong lift and,as if tripping through a wormhole, found myself in the Beijing of the past century.

在2022年9月下旬，我去拜访了中关村的一位著名企业家。我从后门进入了他的办公大楼。错误地，我搭错了电梯，仿佛穿越了一个虫洞，发现自己置身于上个世纪的北京。

In the late 1990s, Zhongguancun, now sometimes referred to as China's Silicon Valley, was largely known for its electronics markets sprawling along the neighborhood. There were several high-rise buildings, in which you could wander around vast open floors packed with stalls selling a wide spectrum of tech devices from DVD players to phones, cameras to TVs, USB cords to printers. Most of them were manufactured or assembled in China.

在20世纪90年代末，中关村，现在有时被称为中国的硅谷，主要因其遍布邻里的电子产品市场而闻名。有几座高层建筑，你可以在其中漫步于广阔的开放楼层，那里摆满了售卖从DVD播放器到手机、相机到电视、USB线到打印机等各种科技设备的摊位。它们大多数都是在中国制造或组装的。

Now, the electronics markets in Zhongguancun are mostly gone. Standing amid the glittering office complex, which is home to some of the most promising high-tech start-ups and R&D2 companies, you can hardly imagine what it was like only a few decades ago.

现在，中关村的电子产品市场大多已经消失。站在这些闪闪发光的办公大楼中，这里是一些最有前途的高科技初创企业和研发公司的所在地，你很难想象仅仅几十年前是什么样子。

There are still some holdouts here, so it's easy to slip into an older lift, as I did, and find yourself surrounded by keyboards and printers. But this contrast also reminds you of just how quickly China is changing. "Some people in Silicon Valley still think all China can do is clone their ideas, but that's out of date. Now I see China as a major driving force for innovation and lots of companies in Western countries are copying China," said an investor working between China and America.

这里仍然有一些坚守者，所以很容易误入一个老旧的电梯，就像我一样，然后发现自己被键盘和打印机包围。但这种对比也提醒你中国变化的速度有多快。“硅谷的一些人仍然认为中国只能克隆他们的想法，但那已经过时了。现在我认为中国是创新的主要推动力，许多西方国家的公司正在模仿中国，”一位在中国和美国之间工作的投资者说。

For now, these worlds coexist: the China of the past and the China of the future.[But increasingly, the one that draws the world's attention is not the factory-and-warehouse aspect of China, but the new innovation-driven China that is poised to reshape the future of global technology, with growing strength in fields ranging from artificial intelligence to drones1 The international community describes China's great development and achievements as "miracles." What is the impetus behind these miracles? That's why I went to meet with this entrepreneur.

目前，这两个世界并存：过去的中国和未来的中国。[但越来越多地，吸引世界注意的不是中国的工厂和仓库方面，而是新的以创新为驱动的中国，它准备重塑全球技术的未来，在从人工智能到无人机的领域中日益增强。国际社会将中国的巨大发展和成就描述为“奇迹”。这些奇迹背后的推动力是什么？这就是我去见这位企业家的原因。

He told me that China's tech landscape' back in the 1990s would be unrecognizable to a young person of today.Foreign brands reigned supreme in the mobile phone sector, e-commerce was just a glimmer in an entrepreneur's eye, and the potential of the Internet was only vaguely realized.

他告诉我，如果今天的一个年轻人回到1990年代的中国科技景观，他将无法认出它。在手机领域，外国品牌占据主导地位，电子商务只是企业家眼中的一丝闪光，互联网的潜力只是隐约被意识到。

However, China has accomplished a remarkable feat in transforming itself from a low-cost manufacturing economy to a higher-value, innovation-led one, in only a few decades. According to the Global Innovation Index 2021 released by the World Intellectual Property Organization, China ranks 12th, moving up two places from 14th in 2020, and maintaining momentum for nine consecutive years.

然而，中国在短短几十年内完成了从低成本制造经济向高价值、以创新为主导的经济的转变，这是一个了不起的壮举。根据世界知识产权组织发布的2021年全球创新指数，中国排名第12位，比2020年的第14位上升了两位，并连续第九年保持上升势头。

"The rise of China as an innovation hub has not happened overnight," the entrepreneur said. "This can be explained by China's consistent and favorable innovation policies for more than three decades, as well as by the fact that it has impressively increased spending on education, science, and technology." According to official data, Chinese investments in R&D have burgeoned since the turn of the century, increasing more than ten times since 2000 and reaching a high of 2.4 percent of GDP in 2020.

“中国作为创新中心的崛起并非一蹴而就，”这位企业家说。“这可以通过中国超过三十年的一贯和有利的创新政策来解释，以及它在教育、科学和技术上的支出令人印象深刻地增加。”根据官方数据，自本世纪初以来，中国在研发上的投资激增，自2000年以来增加了十倍以上，并在2020年达到了GDP的2.4%。

More importantly, China has the ability to translate pro-innovation policy and innovation inputs into sound results, such as technological breakthroughs and high-tech products. After years of hard work, China is now leading the world in the field of aerospace technology, high-speed railways, 5G-enabled technologies, artificial intelligence, and deep-sea exploration. In the long term, some of these innovations might have profound effects on the economy and industry, pretty much like how the invention of electricity and computers changed human life.

更重要的是，中国有能力将亲创新政策和创新投入转化为实实在在的成果，如技术突破和高科技产品。经过多年的努力，中国现在在航天技术、高速铁路、5G技术、人工智能和深海探索领域领先世界。从长远来看，这些创新可能会对经济和产业产生深远的影响，就像电力和计算机的发明改变了人类生活一样。

Innovation is leading China to ride the wave of digitalization and evolve into a global tech hub. And the country is envisioning a shift from ‘made in China' to ‘created in China,' from ‘Chinese speed' to ‘Chinese quality,' and from ‘Chinese products' to ‘Chinese brands,"" he added.

创新正引领中国乘上数字化的浪潮，发展成为全球科技中心。这个国家正设想从“中国制造”转变为“中国创造”，从“中国速度”转变为“中国质量”，从“中国产品”转变为“中国品牌”，他补充道。

Walking out of the building around 7 p.m. after the interview, I found a complex of buildings still brightly lit, probably with many employees working hard on China's next big innovation.

采访结束后，我在晚上7点左右走出大楼，发现一群建筑仍然灯火通明，可能有许多员工正在努力工作，为中国的下一个重大创新。

It is no wonder that when a few weeks ago I talked to a group of Chinese executives about their recent trip to Silicon Valley, the consensus was confidence. "What Silicon Valley has done is impressive, but now I see the most potential in China,"said one executive.The world celebrates Silicon Valley as a center of innovation, but many Chinese executives, particularly from China's growing technology sector, feel increasingly convinced that they can compete head-to-head, engineer by engineer,with the best in Silicon Valley or other innovation hubs.

几周前，当我与一群中国高管讨论他们最近对硅谷的访问时，共识是信心。“硅谷所做的令人印象深刻，但现在我认为中国最有潜力，”一位高管说。世界庆祝硅谷作为创新中心，但许多中国高管，特别是来自中国日益增长的技术部门的高管，越来越确信他们可以与硅谷或其他创新中心的最佳人才进行正面竞争，工程师对工程师。

Indeed, the country has more than its share of world-class companies that are increasingly rising in rankings on size, growth, and, most significantly, innovation1 With a huge capital investment, an educated and ambitious workforce, a can-do spirit, impressive companies, and a dogged spirit to achieve, China is sure to lead in the era of innovation.

事实上，这个国家拥有超过其份额的世界级公司，这些公司在规模、增长和最重要的创新方面日益上升。凭借巨大的资本投资、受过教育且雄心勃勃的劳动力、实干精神、令人印象深刻的公司和坚定的实现精神，中国必将在创新时代领先.

Next time someone tells you China doesn't innovate, suggest that they take a closer look.

下次如果有人告诉你中国不创新，建议他们仔细看看。