

Making China Modern

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FROM THE GREAT QING
TO XI JINPING

Klaus Mühlhahn



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For Sophia, Clara, and Julius

Our nation is new, but at the same time very ancient; it is modern and prosperous, but at the same time feudal and autocratic; it is westernized, but also intrinsically Asian. The world is transforming the nation, even as the nation is simultaneously transforming the world, and through this process the nation's innovation lies in its use of an unfathomable reality to challenge the limits of human imagination. As a result, the nation has come to acquire a sort of unrealistic reality, a non-existent existence, an impossible possibility—in short, it has come to possess an invisible and intangible set of rules and regulations.

—Yan Lianke, *The Explosion Chronicles*