

Asien aktuell

## Chinas neue „Führungsgruppen zur umfassenden Vertiefung der Reform“: Chancen und Risiken politischer Steuerung unter Xi Jinping

Heike Holbig und Jonas Schachtschneider

### Summary

In November 2013 the Chinese Communist Party under its new leader, Xi Jinping, passed its “Decision on the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform.” Among many other ideological and organizational innovations, this watershed document introduced the notion of “top-level design.” With this concept the party leadership has claimed a new paradigm of hierarchical political steering, one designed to succeed the older paradigm of “crossing the water by groping for stones” that had characterized the more incremental and experimental reform approach of the earlier reform period. In due course, various new party organs have been established to implement this new top-down approach — among them the “Leadership Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform” that is headed by Xi Jinping himself. Different from other central leadership groups that have routinely be established by the party on an ad hoc basis in the wake of new reform strategies, leadership groups for comprehensively deepening reform have been formed not only at the central level but also at the provincial, municipal, and even county ones too. Mandated with the task of coordinating and promoting reforms across multiple policy fields, these leadership groups bring together the top echelons of party and government at their respective levels — thus creating a new, high-powered layer of political steering. Based on the analysis of party documents, administrative records, and interviews, this article looks into the organizational structures and the modus operandi of the new leadership groups from the central down to the county level. It identifies potential benefits and risks emerging from the new top-level design, and finds that it might in fact tend to paralyze political steering rather than make it more effective.

**Keywords:** China, political steering, Top-level design, Leadership Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, Xi Jinping

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