

*Steering China's Economic Reform and Cross-Strait Integration Under "Top-Level Design": The Fujian Pilot Free Trade Zone**

Gunter Schubert and Sascha Zhivkov

Abstract

Since 2013 China has established new Pilot Free Trade Zones (PFTZs) across the country to encourage experimentation in economic reform. The objective of the PFTZ policy is twofold: they serve as experimentation grounds for "policy innovation" and further economic development by gradually diffusing reform implementation beyond the PFTZs, and those PFTZs located at border areas promote economic regionalization beyond the Chinese mainland's territory, tying in the "Belt-and-Road Initiative" (BRI). Based on recent fieldwork in the Fujian PFTZ and its three localities, Fuzhou, Xiamen and Pingtan island, this article contributes to our understanding of economic reform and policy experimentation in the era of "top-level design" under Xi Jinping. The authors argue that PFTZ policy achievements have been mostly procedural rather than tackling the core issues of trade, service and financial

Gunter Schubert is Chair Professor of Greater China Studies and Director of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT), University of Tübingen. Correspondence should be sent to gunter.schubert@uni-tuebingen.de.

Sascha Zhivkov is Junior Lecturer at the Chair of Greater China Studies and Resident Fellow at the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan, University of Tübingen.

* We are particularly grateful to Prof. Wang Liping from the China (Fujian) Pilot Free Trade Zone Research Institute for his support in conducting this study and to our anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments.