

## **Changes in the US National Security Council in the Trump Administration**

**Sun Chenghao\***

**Abstract:** The structure of the National Security Council (NSC) under Donald Trump has been tweaked only slightly on the basis of the previous administration's "three tiers of committees" model, and without any breakthrough in reform. However, the NSC also faces a series of new changes and features, including instability caused by changes in the President's entourage, and dysfunction induced by the decreased number of formal meetings. These changes may be attributed principally to the impact of Trump's governing style, management style and informal decision-making process. The NSC's role in the decision-making system varies according to the frequent changes in National Security Advisor. In the 70 plus year history of the NSC, it is evident that its development direction is determined by structural changes in the international pattern, US national security challenges and the transfer of power within the decision-making system. How the President positions and utilizes the NSC ultimately determines the structure and efficiency of the mechanism.

**Keywords:** Donald Trump, National Security Council, National Security Advisor, mechanism evaluation

Less than three years into Trump's presidency, the position of National Security Advisor (also known as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs) has changed hands three times. The fourth National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien, took the baton in September 2019. Frequent changes in the National Security Advisor and other important staff in the NSC and inconsistency in diplomatic decisions of the Trump administration reflect the chaos and disorder of the NSC mechanism. The

---

\* Sun Chenghao is an assistant research professor at the Institute of American Studies, CICIR. His main research fields include American politics and foreign policy.

top-level coordination mechanism for national security policy established in 1947 is facing a severe “old-age crisis”. This article intends to discuss the new changes in the NSC mechanism under the Trump administration, and then to analyze the reasons for these adjustments and to evaluate the role of the mechanism under Trump’s rule.

### **New Changes**

Donald Trump, a political novice, has not only failed to rectify the long-standing problems of the NSC, but has also made one mistake after another in practice. With frequent changes in high-level personnel and an unstable decision-making mechanism, the National Security Council, which has been established for over 70 years, is facing an unprecedented “old-age crisis”, with its organization, coordination and cohesion capabilities being continually weakened.

First, Trump has made slight adjustments to the NSC personnel and framework. When he initially came to office, the NSC core staffs were briefly reorganized: first, former Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon was permanently invited to the NSC’s Principals Committee, a position that placed him “level” with some cabinet officials; second, the Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were decreed to be no longer permanent members of the NSC, receiving invitations only “when the meeting is relevant to their responsibilities”. These two adjustments were immediately criticized by the US strategic community and media. Bannon was seen as the “shadow President”, on par with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense in the NSC, a high-level treatment for political advisors that was unprecedented in previous administrations.<sup>1</sup> After enduring intense pressure, the White House was forced to clarify that the Director of National Intelligence and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Nolan McCaskill, “Former NSC Member Mullen: Steve Bannon Doesn’t Belong on the National Security Council,” *Politico*, February 6, 2017, accessed September 12, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/steve-bannon-no-national-security-council-michael-mullen-234676>; David Rothkopf, “The Danger of Steven Bannon on the National Security Council,” *Washington Post*, March 15, 2017, accessed August 3, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-steve-bannon-on-the-national-security-council/2017/01/29/ba3982a2-e663-11e6-bf6f-301b6b443624\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.45c6e4d8b88a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-steve-bannon-on-the-national-security-council/2017/01/29/ba3982a2-e663-11e6-bf6f-301b6b443624_story.html?utm_term=.45c6e4d8b88a).

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff still possessed permanent membership and could attend meetings at any time, but it did not make a timely response to questions relating to Bannon. After the second National Security Advisor, Herbert McMaster, took office, he sought to realign the NSC and restore its central role in the decision-making system, and announced that Bannon was no longer a permanent member in the NSC.<sup>1</sup> However, Bannon was not supportive of the NSC framework, having attended only one meeting of the Deputies Committee during Flynn's tenure.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the unconventional move to squeeze Bannon frequently into the Principals Committee, Trump has promoted the status of the Executive Secretary in the NSC. Although the Executive Secretary has been the only post with statutory status in the NSC since 1947, since the Kennedy administration its duties have concentrated on clerical management, and it has become increasingly marginal. However, in Trump's NSC, the directors of all functional and geographical committees report to the Executive Secretary, who is involved in the policy process as well as staff management. To complement the new status, Trump appointed Keith Kellogg, a retired Lieutenant General and former Commander of the 82nd Airborne Division. Under normal circumstances, Trump's reform of the NSC would be centered around correcting the defects of the Obama administration, in particular by streamlining, cancelling or merging some unnecessary agencies and posts. However, Trump has constantly "reinvented" by establishing new agencies and posts that overlap with the functions of existing functions, and he has filled them with his own cronies. This fully demonstrates Trump's arbitrary arrangement of the NSC's framework and personnel.

Another widely overlooked change in the NSC is the removal once again of the Homeland Security Council, which was firstly established by the

---

<sup>1</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne: America's Abdication of Global Leadership* (New York: Public Affairs, 2018), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Costa and Abby Phillip, "Stephen Bannon Removed from National Security Council," *Washington Post*, April 5, 2017, accessed August 11, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/04/05/steven-bannon-no-longer-a-member-of-national-security-council/?utm\\_term=.6232c3e94a1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/04/05/steven-bannon-no-longer-a-member-of-national-security-council/?utm_term=.6232c3e94a1).

Bush administration after the September 11 attacks in 2001, and merged into the NSC during the Obama administration. The Trump administration has reversed its predecessor's approach and re-separated the two without any public explanation, attracting little media or academic attention. This move underscores the continuing debate in the US over whether homeland security responsibilities should be assigned to the NSC.

Second, in terms of the NSC's personnel, the National Security Advisor position has changed hands three times, and senior staffs have been shuffled about multiple times as well, seriously disrupting the continuity of the mechanism, and leading to significant fluctuations in its performance. Frequent changes in the role of National Security Advisor can affect NSC team building and performance, and even its decision-making direction on national security policies. Under the Trump administration, the NSC entered a period of stability after the resignation of its first National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, over "Russiagate" and the succession of H.R. McMaster, but "derailed" again after John Bolton took office. After serving in the position for 17 months, Bolton was replaced by Robert O'Brien. The NSC will have to negotiate new adjustments under the leadership of this new National Security Advisor.

After assuming his position, McMaster moved quickly to "purge" the "nationalist" supporters of his predecessors Flynn and Bannon, reorganizing the NSC internal relationships in order to strengthen its leadership and enforcement. Within ten days of taking up his post, McMaster had abolished Flynn's newly-established roles (the Deputy National Security Advisors on global regional affairs and issues of global development). Soon after this, the Deputy National Security Advisor, K.T. McFarland, whom Flynn had brought into the NSC, left his position and was replaced by Dina Powell, the right-hand assistant to Trump's daughter Ivanka. She coordinated and led the writing of the National Security Strategy report. In July 2017, McMaster successively dismissed a close friend of Bannon's, Deputy Chief of Staff, Tera Dahl, and the Senior Director of Strategic Planning, Rich Higgins. In late July and early August, McMaster dismissed two of Flynn's NSC lieutenants, Derek Harvey, the Senior Director for Middle East and North African affairs, and Ezra Cohen-Watnik,

the Senior Director for Intelligence Programs. These officials all supported the anti-globalization stance of Flynn and Bannon. Dahl was a columnist for Breitbart news, and Higgins was dismissed for writing the memo, “*Globalists, Bankers, Deep States and So on Are Destroying America*”.<sup>1</sup> This reshuffle demonstrated that McMaster, in contrast to the likes of Flynn and Bannon, was among the rare traditional “Establishment Republicans” in the White House at the time. McMaster briefly got the NSC back on track by increasing effective interaction between NSC senior officials and the President. During Trump’s phone calls with foreign leaders, McMaster reintroduced NSC senior officials to the oval office, while his predecessor Flynn merely allowed them to “sit in” on the situation in a room downstairs.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar fashion to McMaster, Bolton, who took office in April 2018, reshuffled NSC top staff within the space of a week, installing “his own people”, removing the cybersecurity coordinator, and taking firm control of the NSC’s decision-making process, making full personnel preparations for any potential internal conflict.<sup>3</sup> Bolton not only fired Nadia Schadlow, the Deputy National Security Advisor who took over from Powell in January 2018, but also installed ideological-evident figures in key NSC posts. Prior to Bolton’s appointment, most NSC posts were filled temporarily by officials from the Department of State, the Department of Defense and the intelligence agencies for periods of one to two years, and then in rotation. But after Bolton took over at the NSC, he deliberately left these posts vacant or filled them with right-wing conservatives who shared his ideology once they had fulfilled tenures. For instance, during Bolton’s tenure, the NSC’s Middle East and North Africa Division was made up of

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosie Gray, “An NSC Staffer Is Forced Out over a Controversial Memo,” *Atlantic*, August 2, 2017, accessed August 3, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/a-national-security-council-staffer-is-forced-out-over-a-controversial-memo/535725/>.

<sup>2</sup> Tara Palmeri, “NSC Staff Allowed Back into the Oval Office for Trump’s Foreign Calls,” *Politico*, March 8, 2017, accessed August 5, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/nsc-staff-oval-office-trump-foreign-calls-235812>.

<sup>3</sup> Josh Rogin, “John Bolton’s New Deputy Is a Hawk with Sharp Elbows, Just like Him,” *Washington Post*, April 23, 2018, accessed August 5, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/04/23/john-boltons-new-deputy-is-a-hawk-with-sharp-elbows-just-like-him/?utm\\_term=.4545df3a0238](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2018/04/23/john-boltons-new-deputy-is-a-hawk-with-sharp-elbows-just-like-him/?utm_term=.4545df3a0238).

roughly one third of the 18 people it had in it under the Obama administration. Bolton also hired Charles Kupperman, a conservative policy advisor who had been a personal friend of Bolton for 30 years, as Deputy National Security Advisor, building an inner circle within the NSC that would follow his lead in policies against Russia, North Korea and Iran.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien, is a lawyer by training but no political neophyte. As early as 2005, he served as Deputy Representative of the United States to the United Nations under President George W. Bush. In 2007, he worked on Afghanistan-related issues under the then Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. O'Brien came into Trump's sight in 2017 when he was considered for the position of Secretary of the Navy, a post that ultimately he did not fill. The following May, Trump appointed O'Brien as the State Department's Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs. This appointment marked a further dial-down of the NSC in the White House decision-making system. The big test for O'Brien and his NSC will be whether he, as a former subordinate of Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, can shake off his role as sidekick and put himself on par with Pompeo towards coordinating policy.

In terms of the NSC's mid-level personnel, as the appointment of staff does not require approval from the Senate, key positions in regional affairs were allocated at an early stage. For instance, Matthew Pottinger, who has significant experience in Chinese affairs, was quickly appointed as Senior Director for East Asia Affairs. Later, he was not stripped of this position in the absence of Flynn, McMaster and Bolton. On the contrary, he was promoted to Deputy National Security Advisor after O'Brien took office, underlining the importance of Chinese affairs in America's overall foreign policy. McMaster appointed Lisa Curtis of the Heritage Foundation and Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution as senior directors for South

---

<sup>1</sup> Karen DeYoung, Greg Jaffe, John Hudson and Josh Dawsey, "John Bolton Puts His Singular Stamp on Trump's National Security Council," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2019, accessed September 12, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/john-bolton-single-minded-advocate-puts-his-stamp-on-the-national-security-council/2019/03/04/5c59517e-3609-11e9-854a-7a14d7fec96a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8319bf8fa46f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/john-bolton-single-minded-advocate-puts-his-stamp-on-the-national-security-council/2019/03/04/5c59517e-3609-11e9-854a-7a14d7fec96a_story.html?utm_term=.8319bf8fa46f).

and Central Asia, Russia and Europe.

Third, in terms of the NSC's day-to-day operations, high-level formal meetings have decreased sharply, and inner circle decision-making has become the primary mode of operation. To date, Bolton has been the longest-serving National Security Advisor in the Trump administration, exerting the biggest influence on the day-to-day work of the NSC. During his time in office, Bolton deliberately positioned the NSC as an arbiter, selecting policies based on his personal preferences to report to the President. He also strictly controlled the number of formal meetings and participants, leading to a sharp decline in the number of formal meetings. Bolton reduced the policy debate by requiring only high-level security officials to attend, and sometimes inviting ideological "allies" with no decision-making experience on behalf of other cabinet officials. The Principals Committee and the Deputies Committee, which are supposed to play an important role in the NSC mechanism, held very few coordination meetings. Former Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, once complained that McMaster had organized too many meetings, and that Bolton had convened too few. Even on the issue of America's withdrawal from the INF Treaty, the NSC Principals Committee under Bolton failed to meet even once, seriously disrupting the decision-making procedure. A week before Trump's meeting with Kim Jong-un in June 2018, Bolton had not convened a cabinet-level meeting within the NSC to discuss the event.<sup>1</sup> Conversely, Bolton focused more on small and informal weekly meetings with the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense, but these meetings were not documented, much less reported to the rest of the Cabinet. Bolton scheduled short, small meetings within the NSC for the President, asserting that an inner circle would be more suitable for Trump, and that this would allow him to gain tighter control on any information released to the President.

In short, the structure of the NSC mechanism has not changed significantly, but its personnel and operations have been altered in manifest ways. In

---

<sup>1</sup> Eliana Johnson, "Trump and Bolton Spurn Top-Level North Korea Planning," *Politico*, June 7, 2018, accessed October 16, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/06/07/trump-bolton-north-korea-630362>.

terms of structure, the NSC still adheres to the traditional model of “three tiers of committees”. In terms of personnel, the NSC has seen four National Security Advisors, each heralding a new round of personnel reshuffles. In terms of operations, the decrease in the number of high-level formal coordination meetings has become the most notable new feature of Trump’s NSC.

### **Trump’s Personal Styles Driving Changes in the National Security Council**

In recent years, the US strategic community has been paying a huge amount of attention to the inter-departmental decision-making mechanism within the government, and has proposed some major and minor suggestions on the NSC mechanism during different periods, with a view to influencing the US government to adjust the NSC. Before Trump took office, the US strategic community generally criticized the NSC under Obama for its excessive interference, fragmented management and overexpansion, proposing that the NSC should improve its strategic planning capability, encourage all divisions to express their views openly, avoid meetings in which form outweighed content, strengthen policy supervision and implementation, and improve human resources construction.<sup>1</sup> Since Obama’s NSC pursued the “Scowcroft model” of George H. W. Bush, there was still room for change within the mechanism. The most representative and preferred reform proposal of all time has been a return to the model

---

<sup>1</sup> For representative advice on reform, please refer to: Shawn Brimley, Dafna H. Rand, Julianne Smith and Jacob Stokes, “Enabling Decision: Shaping the National Security Council for the New President,” Center for a New American Security, June 2015, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report\\_NSC-Reform\\_Final.pdf?mtime=20160906081915](https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report_NSC-Reform_Final.pdf?mtime=20160906081915); Kim Holmes, “Memo to a New President: How Best to Organize the National Security Council,” The Heritage Foundation, April 14, 2016, <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/memo-new-president-how-best-organize-the-national-security-council>; Luke Strange, “The National Security Council: A Tool for Decision,” American Enterprise Institute, March 2018, accessed August 3, 2019, <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NSC.pdf>.

of Eisenhower, an idea that was reflected in the Obama administration.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of the size of the NSC, the US strategic community proposed two vastly different reform directions. One voice argued that the NSC should maintain or expand its current size, believing that effective policy coordination in the US government was still taking place at the NSC level, and that other agencies and institutions had their hands tied when it came to guaranteeing inter-departmental policy coordination. In the absence of an alternative mechanism, the NSC would respond better to the ever-changing international situation by maintaining a certain size. The other voice argued that the NSC was so overstaffed that its role had gone beyond the original purpose of assisting the President with strategy and oversight. Worse still, the NSC's personnel had overstepped the mark by interfering in affairs in other agencies. Robert Gates, a former Secretary of Defense, once said that NSC staff would sometimes make direct calls to Four-Star Generals on the front line, undermining the chain of command.<sup>2</sup> This school believes that only by limiting its size can the NSC better focus on its core strategic responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> John Hamre, a former Deputy Secretary of Defense and President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, suggested limiting it to a staff of 50, claiming that excessive staff would distract the

---

<sup>1</sup> Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Philip G. Henderson, "Organizing the Presidency for Effective Leadership: Lessons from the Eisenhower Years," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1987): 43-69; Robert Bowie and Richard Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (Oxford University Press, 1998); Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, "Effective National Security Advising: Recovering the Eisenhower Years," *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 115, No. 3 (2000): 335-345; Raymond Millen, "Cultivating Strategic Thinking: The Eisenhower Model," *Parameters — The Journal of the United States Army War College*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2012): 56-70.

<sup>2</sup> Eyder Peralta and Mark Memmott, "Gates: Obama Made Solid Decisions, But Was Swayed by Factious Staff," NPR, January 13, 2014, accessed September 17, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2014/01/13/261419660/gates-obama-made-solid-decisions-but-was-swayed-by-factious-staff>.

<sup>3</sup> Shawn Brimley, Dafna H. Rand, Julianne Smith and Jacob Stokes, "Enabling Decision: Shaping the National Security Council for the New President," Center for a New American Security, June 2015, accessed October 11, 2019, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report\\_NSC-Reform\\_Final.pdf?mtime=20160906081915](https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report_NSC-Reform_Final.pdf?mtime=20160906081915).

agency from matters belonging to the executive branch.<sup>1</sup>

Encouraged by Trump's talk after he assumed office of delegating power to the Cabinet, many have called for the new President to establish a more decentralized decision-making mechanism, or even a board-style NSC. In this sense, the NSC under the Trump administration does not come without expectation. The administration released the "National Security Presidential Memorandum-2" and "National Security Presidential Memorandum-4" on January 28 and April 4, 2017 respectively, portraying the structure and personnel of the new NSC. According to these documents, the NSC's regular attendance includes the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the National Security Advisor, the Homeland Security Advisor, and the US Permanent Representative to the United Nations. When discussions relate to the international economy, the Secretary of Commerce, the US Trade Representatives, and the Economic Advisor to the President are also invited to attend. The Director of National Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff also attend as statutory advisors to the NSC.

As a political novice, Trump did not adopt the advice of the US strategic community on the NSC humbly. Instead, he has placed more trust in the inner circle members of his electoral team, which have generally speaking lacked political experience. Trump has also completely ignored outside voices on NSC reform, leaving the structure almost unchanged from the Obama administration. The new changes during Trump's tenure were influenced predominantly by his governing style, management style and informal decision-making processes.

First, Trump does not attach importance to the NCS mechanism and the construction of his national security team. Harbingers of NCS's personnel and organization problems appeared during the transition period before Trump's inauguration. Trump has experienced many twists and

---

<sup>1</sup> John Hamre, "Reflections: Improving the Interagency Process," CSIS, February 23, 2016, accessed September 21, 2019, <https://defense360.csis.org/improving-the-interagency-process/>.

turns in the process of building his national security team, from appointing Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, to the head of his presidential transition team, before giving the job to Vice President, Mike Pence, and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Upon the recommendation of Trump's daughter Ivanka, Michael Flynn was put on the list of National Security Advisor candidates.<sup>1</sup> However, serious lapses in Flynn's background checks exposed the neglect that Trump and his team had for the job. Before the official appointment, some media disclosed that Flynn had lobbied for Turkey's interests, on which he had made false statements and omissions. The presidential transition team had had no scent of this. Flynn's immediate purge of Christie's national security team after he took office seriously slowed down the process of team building. It was not until mid-December 2016 that one of Flynn's closest aides, Keith Kellogg, was appointed as the Executive Secretary of the NSC. This was a sign of the slow pace in the appointment of top officials.

The non-expertise of Trump's presidential transition team in national security matters was another significant reason for the early chaos of the NSC mechanism. The team showed no interest in reaching out to Obama's national security team, and it wasn't until November 22, 2016 that Trump's national security team met with Obama's for the first time.<sup>2</sup> Flynn had met Obama's National Security Advisor, Susan Rice, at least four times before Trump's inauguration, but team members from two sides seldom met.<sup>3</sup> Further, Trump's team was equally indifferent to the transition documents prepared by the Obama administration. Obama's NSC officials had prepared a trove of unclassified documents and materials for Trump's team, but both Obama's Deputy National Security Advisor, Ben Rhodes, and White House Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough, said that these

---

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Cook, "How Flynn—and the Russia Scandal—Landed in the West Wing," *Politico*, November 11, 2017, accessed Sep 16, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/11/11/how-michael-flynn-got-west-wing-job-244790>.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Landler, "Trump National Security Team Gets a Slow Start," *New York Times*, January 19, 2017, A12.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: Random House, 2018), 407-408.

documents were brushed aside.<sup>1</sup>

Second, it has been difficult for the NSC to deliver comprehensive and detailed information to the President on account of Trump's personal impatience with and dislike of the written word. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor to President Carter, argues that the President's personal working style has defined the NSC since its inception.<sup>2</sup> NSC staff have to keep their meetings brief in order to keep Trump's attention. In addition, they try to limit important documents to about one page, ideally with graphics, for better effect.<sup>3</sup> Even if the documents submitted are already reduced in length, Trump can still find them too long. NSC officials deliberately place Trump's name in a conspicuous place on documents submitted to him, as this makes it more likely that his attention will be piqued, and therefore more likely that he will read them.<sup>4</sup> Trump seldom reads the President's Daily Briefing, a daily routine for former Presidents, but prefers oral reports, and he has cut down daily meetings with the National Security Advisor, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of National Intelligence to two or three times a week, with the frequent interruptions of incoming calls and people entering his office while he listens to oral reports.<sup>5</sup> To keep Trump from getting bored, NSC intelligence officials have gone out of their way to include pictures, videos

---

<sup>1</sup> Ben Rhodes, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: Random House, 2018), 407-408; Chris Whipple, *The Gatekeepers: How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency* (New York: Broadway Books, 2017), 299.

<sup>2</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The NSC's Midlife Crisis," *Foreign Policy*, No. 69 (Winter, 1987/1988): 81.

<sup>3</sup> David Sanger, Eric Schmitt and Peter Baker, "Turmoil at the National Security Council, From the Top Down," *New York Times*, February 12, 2017, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/12/us/politics/national-security-council-turmoil.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Holland and Jeff Mason, "Embroided in Controversies, Trump Seeks Boost on Foreign Trip," Reuters, May 17, 2017, accessed Oct 13, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-trip/embroided-in-controversies-trump-seeks-boost-on-foreign-trip-idUSKCN18D0C7>.

<sup>5</sup> Dexter Filkins, "John Bolton on the Warpath," *New Yorker*, April 29, 2019, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/06/john-bolton-on-the-warpath>.

and graphics in their briefings.<sup>1</sup> Before the US launched a limited military strike on Syria in April 2017, it was the images prepared by Ivanka and Dina Powell, the then Deputy National Security Advisor, that encouraged Trump to make his final resolve.<sup>2</sup>

Third, Trump's decision-making style conflicts with that of previous National Security Advisors. His management style of emphasizing internal competition while seeking loyalty undermines the stability of power within the White House and interferes with the traditional coordinating role of the NSC. Judging by the performance of the NSC after Trump's official inauguration, although the second National Security Advisor, H. R. McMaster, tried to re-establish the traditional NSC mechanism, Trump could not restrain his own personality and often bypassed this mechanism in order to make decisions of his own. In terms of departmental relationships, Trump's governing style of pitting subordinates against one another has intensified inter-departmental rivalries. Trump favors an open, competitive and arbitrary decision-making system that centers on himself, and prefers to run the system by command rather than through involvement in an actual decision-making process. Former White House Chief of Staff, Reince Priebus, revealed that Trump likes to surround himself with competing officials, for example having Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, and Senior Economic Advisor, Gary Cohn, debate tariff issues in front of him.<sup>3</sup> Further, Trump confuses the responsibilities of his subordinates by assigning the same task to different officials, and assigning tasks beyond the scope of some officials' responsibilities. This combative management style has led to a rapid turnover of key officials. The turnover rate of Trump's "A-team" for decision-making was 34 percent in his first year

---

<sup>1</sup> Carol D. Leoning, Shane Harris and Greg Jaffe, "Breaking with Tradition, Trump Skips President's Written Intelligence Report and Relies on Oral Briefings," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2018, accessed October 15, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/breaking-with-tradition-trump-skips-presidents-written-intelligence-report-for-oral-briefings/2018/02/09/b7ba569e-0c52-11e8-95a5-c396801049ef\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/breaking-with-tradition-trump-skips-presidents-written-intelligence-report-for-oral-briefings/2018/02/09/b7ba569e-0c52-11e8-95a5-c396801049ef_story.html).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Wolff, *Fire and Fury: Inside the Trump White House* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2018), 192-194.

<sup>3</sup> Kyle Balluck, "Priebus Counsels White House Staff to Ignore 'Distractions'," *The Hill*, March 4, 2018, accessed September 25, 2019, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/376632-priebus-counsels-white-house-staff-to-ignore-distractions>.

and 31 percent in the second, compared with nine percent in Obama's first year and 15 percent in his second.<sup>1</sup> The exodus of key decision-makers and the influx of new officials will only make NSC's coordination work even more demanding.

Fourth, Trump is given to informal decision-making, which undermines the formal policy coordination mechanism of the NSC. US Presidents have a tradition of relying on informal decision-making processes. For example, Lyndon Johnson deemed that the "Tuesday lunch" was the perfect place to discuss the Vietnam war; Richard Nixon hated to see his staff bickering in formal meetings but preferred to read documents alone or to consult privately with Henry Kissinger; Carter made a point of holding a weekly "Friday breakfast meeting" during which he exchanged views with the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and the National Security Advisor. However, Trump's position on a series of major issues has repeatedly clashed with that of the NSC, proving that the formal decision-making process of the NSC has not played its due role in full as a key policy hub for the White House. Trump has repeatedly clashed with John Bolton, his third National Security Advisor, over the withdrawal of US troops from Syria and sanctions against North Korea. This exposes the President's disconnect from the NSC mechanism. Trump has strongly expressed his dissatisfaction with Bolton, especially over issues relating to North Korea, directly criticizing his idea of replicating the "Libyan model" as "very big mistake" and suggesting this had something to do with Bolton's dismissal.<sup>2</sup> Because of his lack of trust in the NSC mechanism, Trump has chosen to facilitate important agendas through inner circle decision-making. In September 2019, before planning a secret meeting at Camp David with the Taliban and the Afghan

---

<sup>1</sup> For the definition of "A-Team" please refer to: Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, "Tracking Turnover in the Trump Administration," January 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/tracking-turnover-in-the-trump-administration/>; Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, "Why Is Trump's Staff Turnover Higher than the 5 Most Recent Presidents?" January 19, 2018, accessed September 23, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/why-is-trumps-staff-turnover-higher-than-the-5-most-recent-presidents/>.

<sup>2</sup> Danielle Haynes, "Trump: Bolton's Mistakes on North Korea, Tense Relationships Led to Firing," September 11, 2019, accessed October 26, 2019, [https://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/US/2019/09/11/Trump-Boltons-mistakes-on-North-Korea-tense-relationships-led-to-firing/5681568228678/](https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2019/09/11/Trump-Boltons-mistakes-on-North-Korea-tense-relationships-led-to-firing/5681568228678/).

government, Trump directly bypassed the NSC's formal decision-making mechanism, and invited only the Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, the then National Security Advisor, John Bolton, and a handful of staff to participate in preliminary discussions. Later, this led to widespread criticism of the Afghanistan policy.<sup>1</sup>

## **Evaluation on the Function of the National Security Council Mechanism**

As the NSC mechanism has formed a relatively stable pattern over more than 70 years, and with the power of the decision-making system of the US government shifting to the White House, even if Trump does not follow the development law of the NSC, the top-level coordination mechanism's structure will remain and play an indispensable role to a certain extent. However, frequent changes of National Security Advisor have had different implications on the functioning of the NSC. The first National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, served for less than a month. His predecessor, John McMaster, tried to get the NSC back on track, completing some efficient policy coordination and crisis response. The third National Security Advisor John Bolton, favored the inner circle decision-making process, largely paralyzing the NSC mechanism.

Trump's NSC has not changed the decision-making and coordination structure of the "three tiers of committees", institutionally ensuring that the NSC is still at the top of the decision-making system. In terms of hierarchy and control, the NSC remains to establish the three tiers of committees, namely the Principals Committee, convened and presided over by the National Security Advisor, the Deputies Committee, convened and presided over by the Deputy National Security Advisor, and the Policy Coordination Committees convened and presided over by relevant senior officials in the NSC or co-presided over by other officials designated by the Deputies Committee. In terms of function, the Principals Committee is a high-level

---

<sup>1</sup> Peter Baker, Mujib Mashal and Michael Crowley, "How Trump's Plan to Secretly Meet with the Taliban Came Together, and Fell Apart," September 10, 2019, accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/08/world/asia/afghanistan-trump-camp-david-taliban.html>.

inter-departmental policy research mechanism responsible for reviewing, coordinating and supervising the formulation and implementation of national security policies. The Deputies Committee is responsible for reviewing and supervising the work progress of inter-departmental teams and providing advice on the formulation and implementation of national security policies. The Policy Coordination Committees classifies its function according to the region and field of issue, and is responsible for the day-to-day inter-departmental coordination of national security policies, providing policy analysis to superior committees, and responding to presidential decisions in a timely manner. Although the structure of the “three tiers of committees” has been maintained, there are still two serious problems with Trump’s NSC mechanism, which damage its role as a top-level coordinator.

First, The NSC under the Trump administration failed to follow its historical development rule. When the focus of the US national security strategy shifted from anti-terrorism to “great power competition”,<sup>1</sup> the NSC mechanism failed to deliver significant reform or to adapt to the requirements of foreign strategies. Historically, the NSC has always been in a state of evolution, without settling on any fixed pattern. The overall trend of this evolution conforms to two laws. First, with regard to external factors, changes in the international power pattern and external challenges determine the development direction of the NSC. Second, with regard to the internal power structure, power gradually gathers to the White House, improving the overall status of the NSC in the decision-making system.

With regard to external factors, changes in the international pattern and external challenges are important drivers for the evolution of the NSC mechanism, whose effect is often more obvious when the international situation or the US national security strategy faces significant change. Established in 1947, the NSC serves not only as America’s response to the Cold War and the pressure response to combat readiness, but also, to some extent, as a solution to internal coordination problems. During the Cold War, when the bipolar structure was relatively stable, the NSC made some

---

<sup>1</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy*, December 2017, accessed December 20, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

stress adjustments based on the Cold War's intensification and alleviation, and continuously revised the mechanism according to the former government's reactive compensation on the NSC. This included gradually decreasing the importance of the State Council in the coordination mechanism, friendly collaboration between the White House and the Cabinet in decision-making coordination, and the National Security Advisor positioning himself in a central coordinating role, and so on. Some of these efforts have contributed to the successful coordination of policy and responses to crises, while others have resulted in incidents such as internal friction between National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and scandals such as the "Iran-Contra affair" under the Reagan administration. It was not until after the Cold War that the NSC's "three tiers of committees", pioneered by George H. W. Bush, became a model for the following administrations. This mechanism has maintained stability for two reasons: on one hand, its setup conforms to the law of departmental coordination. The White House and cabinet departments can minimize business friction as well as overlap. The clear three-level decision-making process chain also effectively averts the awkward situation of subordinates coordinating superiors. This means that staffs at all levels are able to perform their respective duties efficiently. On the other hand, the Cold War caused America's greatest enemy, and as such some of the NSC's reform as driven by external factors became unnecessary. The US enjoyed its "unipolar moment" and "one super power and multi-great powers" pattern while losing the incentive to make bold reform in the NSC. Since this time, bureaucratic inertia in the administrations of Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump has led to some tinkering with the NSC, if not sweeping reform.

The NSC is composed essentially of presidential staff members, and changes in the international environment have shaped it in different ways under different Presidents, especially under Trump. Clinton saw the trend towards globalization, and emphasized economic issues accordingly, establishing the National Economic Council to complement the NSC. In light of the September 11 attacks, George W. Bush steered his national security policy to counter-terrorism, establishing the Homeland Security

Council as a means of strengthening the policy coordination ability of the White House. Obama expanded the NSC's role in coordinating cyber and energy security. Compared with previous Presidents, Trump, a political novice without diplomatic strategy operators, is less willing or capable to adjust the institutional arrangements of the NSC according to the international situation. America's sense of security changed once again after Trump acceded to office. In the first *National Security Strategy* published by the Trump administration, the US government's judgment of the international situation tended to be negative. It decreed that competition among great powers and in the geopolitical game would return, and that the world is facing increasing competition in politics, the economy, and the military.<sup>1</sup> However, Trump has not made substantial reform to the NSC in line with the idea of great power competition. Instead, he has focused more on domestic security, and emphasized the impact of illegal immigrants on Americans. This demonstrates that Trump is the "President of internal affairs" as opposed to a "President of foreign affairs". It is the importance that Trump places in domestic security that drove him to reverse the reform of the NSC promulgated by his predecessor Barack Obama, and to re-separate the Homeland Security Council from the NSC and restore the coexistence of the two committees under George W. Bush, which became the biggest change during his tenure.

In terms of power transfer, the NSC was initially established to balance the President's power to a certain extent, and to prevent deviation in decision-making arising from departmentalism and power play. However, decades of growth in the NSC is very much in synch with the power transfer from the Cabinet to the White House, and the NSC not only failed to become a power balance or a brake pad, but on the contrary emerges as an indispensable assistant to the President. The NSC shifted from that of "small State Department" under President Kennedy, due to the rise of the National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, to an eight major cross-departmental decision-making mechanisms in Nixon era, with Henry

---

<sup>1</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy*, December 2017, accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

Kissinger as the National Security Advisor, and then to the “Scowcroft model” under George H. W. Bush. The overall process may have had its ups and downs, but the NSC’s significance in the decision-making system has been gradually on the rise.

The significance of shifts in the NSC may be viewed from two aspects. First, NSC staff numbers have maintained an overall growth. Generally speaking, the NSC is composed of three groups. The first of these consists of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense and other statutory members. The second group includes the Director of National Intelligence, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other statutory advisors. The third is made up of other professionals and executive staff. The first and second groups are relatively stable in terms of personnel, while the third is constantly changing, with a general trend towards expansion. At one point in history, the NSC was small in size, before soaring from about 50 people under Nixon and 40 under George H.W. Bush to 100 people under Clinton and nearly 400 under Obama.<sup>1</sup> During Trump’s tenure, the number has been kept at around 310. However, after “Ukraine-gate”, Trump had hoped to promote internal confidentiality by reducing NSC staff numbers, narrowing down confidants of the government’s internal affairs, and sending “home” NSC staff from the Defense Department, the State Council, Intelligence and other departments.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Trump’s NSC also plans to merge functional posts that overlap with other agencies of the White House. This will mitigate against situations such as the National Economic Council, headed by Larry Kudlow, taking control of the agency responsible for international economy, an event that

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl F. Inderfurth, Loch K. Johnson, *Fateful Decisions: Inside the National Security Council* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 131; Karen DeYoung, “How the Obama White House Runs Foreign Policy,” August 4, 2015, accessed October 20, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-the-obama-white-house-runs-foreign-policy/2015/08/04/2befb960-2fd7-11e5-8353-1215475949f4\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.38244b3fb02f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-the-obama-white-house-runs-foreign-policy/2015/08/04/2befb960-2fd7-11e5-8353-1215475949f4_story.html?utm_term=.38244b3fb02f).

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Jacobs and Justin Sink, “Trump Orders Cut to National Security Staff After Whistle-Blower,” Bloomberg, October 5, 2019, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-05/trump-orders-cut-to-national-security-staff-after-whistle-blower>.

saw the NSC's 174 policy positions shrink to 120 by early 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Second, the NSC has been addressing an increasing number of agendas. In the face of increasingly complex national security challenges, the NSC coordination mechanism has been constantly evolving according to the White House's ever-diverse decision-making requirements. In addition to promoting internal organizational culture and targeting "multi-party advocacy", the NSC has also established corresponding sub committees, as embodied in particular in the third tier of coordination mechanism under the NSC's "three tiers of committees". It has also set up similar parallel architectures to meet the needs of corresponding hot-spot and functional issues. These include the National Economic Council under Bill Clinton, the Homeland Security Council under George W. Bush, etc. Accordingly, the NSC's expansion in personnel and flexibility in meeting attendees has been promoted. For example, the Secretary of Finance, the Attorney General and the Secretary of Energy have all been granted attendance at the Principals Committee and other related meetings at different points in time, and the duty of the NSC's third inter-departmental panel has also expanded, putting particular pressure on the State Council in diplomatic decision-making.

Second, the frequent changes in National Security Advisor in the Trump administration have exerted a very unique effect on the NSC mechanism, threatening the very stability of the coordination mechanism. As the first National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn had too short a tenure to be able to generate any actual effect. H. R. McMaster, the second National Security Advisor, was essentially a rare "Establishment Republican" within the Trump administration, preferring to construct this policy coordination mechanism in a more traditional way, and thus he made a series of positive adjustments to clarify the position of National Security Advisor. After McMaster took office, he became aware of controversy at the NSC, and he issued "National Security Presidential Memorandum 4"

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. O'Brien, "Here's How I Will Streamline Trump's National Security Council," *Washington Post*, October 16, 2019, accessed October 21, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/robert-c-obrien-heres-how-i-will-streamline-trumps-national-security-council/2019/10/16/2b306360-f028-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/robert-c-obrien-heres-how-i-will-streamline-trumps-national-security-council/2019/10/16/2b306360-f028-11e9-89eb-ec56cd414732_story.html).

accordingly, which restored the NSC to its traditional form of fully empowering the National Security Advisor. McMaster gained not only the absolute authority to convene and preside over the Principals Committee, but he also curtailed the power of the Homeland Security Advisor.

Under McMaster, the NSC's policy coordination and crisis management capabilities were improved. In the early days of the Trump administration, the State Department, the Department of Defense and other cabinet departments were understaffed, and power was further concentrated to the White House, resulting in the NSC, led by McMaster, duly seizing power. Under McMaster the NSC completed a policy review of the Korean Peninsula issue in April 2017.<sup>1</sup> As for the Cuba issues, the NSC launched a US-Cuba policy review in February 2017. In early May, the NSC convened a Deputies Committee, which ultimately empowered the White House to establish a number of tightening policies on Cuba in areas such as the economy, trade and tourism.<sup>2</sup> Under McMaster's leadership and the efforts of the then Deputy National Security Advisor Colin Powell, the White House published the *National Security Strategy* in December 2017, an important document that guided US national security strategy for a period of time.<sup>3</sup>

Despite some shortcomings in coordinating the work of various divisions, under McMaster the NSC remained the Trump administration's preferred crisis response mechanism, and it played an effective role. During the Syria crisis in April 2017, Trump declared that Syria's actions had crossed red lines, and he convened four NSC meetings within 60 hours in order to discuss a suitable response. The NSC decision followed a standard textbook procedure, with divisions gathering information and assessing the use of chemical weapons, and response options were hotly debated by various parties. Trump met with and listened to his staff several

---

<sup>1</sup> Matt Spetalnick, "Trump National Security Aides Complete North Korea Policy Review: Official," Reuters, April 3, 2017, accessed September 21, 2019, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-review-idUSKBN1740UY>.

<sup>2</sup> Tim Fernholz, "Trump Might Ditch the Historic US-Cuba Opening for Slivers of Support in Washington", Quartz, Jun 8, 2017, accessed August 20, 2019, <https://qz.com/1000871/trump-might-ditch-the-historic-us-cuba-opening-for-slivers-of-support-in-washington/>.

<sup>3</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy*, December 2017.

times, and finally decided to launch a missile strike on a Syrian military airport on April 7.<sup>1</sup> However, after the third National Security Advisor John Bolton took office, the basic task of crisis response was no longer able to be delivered. The chaos and disorder of the NSC's coordination mechanism were fully exposed after Trump's last-minute decision to withdraw military strikes against Iran and his planned Camp David meeting with Taliban leaders was revealed by the media.

John Bolton turned the NSC into his own inner circle decision-making mechanism, which was a complete deviation from the original intention to draw on useful opinion either of his predecessors. Shortly after taking up the post, he told Trump that he could not work with Kellogg, a former aide to McMaster, so Trump sent Kellogg to work for Vice President Pence. Bolton also downsized several divisions, including the division for the Middle East and North Africa affairs. Under President Obama this division had 18 people. It was cut to about one third of this size number under Bolton. Further, Bolton tapped Mauricio Claver-Carone, a political activist who advocates sanctions against Cuba, to replace a CIA officer as head of Latin America Affairs. The NSC became a place for Bolton to facilitate his own agendas, and accordingly the NSC coordination mechanism was largely shelved. Bolton often stated his policy positions at the start of NSC meetings, challenging and refuting objections from all sides. As a tough confrontation advocate, he focused more on Iran, DPRK and China, and less on other regions, and he communicated predominantly with staff in the Middle East and Asia Affairs Division. Some White House officials complained that while McMaster's office door was always open, Bolton's was closed, and he gave little feedback on memos.<sup>2</sup> Bolton's lone-wolf approach exacerbated Trump's belief in making decisions without relying on the NSC. Trump was not dependent on any formal decision-making system in the first place, which further downgrades the status of the National Security Advisor.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *The Empty Throne: America's Abdication of Global Leadership* (New York: Public Affairs, 2018), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Dexter Filkins, "John Bolton on the Warpath," *New Yorker*, April 29, 2019, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/06/john-bolton-on-the-warpath>.

Trump chose to part ways with Bolton, even preferring to consult Tucker Carlson, the conservative Fox News host, on some issues.<sup>1</sup> In Trump's view, the lack of a strong National Security Advisor does not affect the decision-making system, and this is a major reason for his appointing Robert O'Brien, a notably less capable State Department official with little experience in policy coordination, to replace Bolton.

### **Conclusion**

Compared with previous administrations, under Trump the NSC carried out only minor adjustments in its organizational structure as opposed to breakthrough reform. This is mainly because the NSC mechanism has formed a stable pattern after more than 70 years of development, and Trump and his team, both lacking in political experience, have neither the ability nor the willingness to reform. Even so, Trump's decision-making style, management style and the changes that he has made in the key personnel of the NSC have had a great impact on the mechanism, resulting in a serious "old-age crisis". Some of these problems are not new, but old issues that have cropped up in successive US administrations since its inception, and therefore cannot be resolved in a short space of time.

The 70-plus year history of the NSC also proves that the structural changes in the international landscape, the national security challenges facing the US, and the power transfer within the decision-making system are all important factors determining the direction of the NSC's development.

Generally speaking, as long as the trend for decision-making power shifting from the Cabinet to the White House does not change, the NSC's position in the decision-making system will remain stable. The "three tiers of committees" incepted in the Nixon era and officially established in the George H.W. Bush era still forms the main structure for the stability of the NSC mechanism. This indirectly proves that despite its many deficiencies, as the national security decision-making coordination mechanism of a major power, the NSC is still a relevant top-level mechanism upon which

---

<sup>1</sup> John Gans, "How John Bolton Broke the National Security Council," *New York Times*, September 10, 2019, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/10/opinion/john-bolton-trump.html>.

decision-makers in Washington can rely. They can also supplement it and make necessary reforms to the original structure when faced with a series of escalating national security challenges.

After the Cold War, the NSC's momentum for breakthrough reform waned. The end of the bipolar structure and internal bureaucratic inertia led the President to believe that continuing the existing structure was sufficient to meet the requirements of national security policy coordination. However, if the US truly directs its foreign strategy towards "great power competition" and engages in specific strategy design, and if it sees China as a Cold War-style strategic opponent and pushes its national security policy back into a war footing model similar to that of the Cold War, then it will be possible for the NSC to engage in reform. In the background of the so-called "whole of government" and "whole of society" strategy on China, there would be compelling external stimulus to satisfy the political and strategic need for internal integration and external decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

*(edited by Li Xin)*

---

<sup>1</sup> Hou Haili, Ni Feng, "Meiguo 'Quanzhengfu-Quanshehui' duihua zhanlue tanxi [An analysis on the US 'whole of government - whole of society' strategy towards China]," *Dangdai shijie* [Contemporary World], No.7 (2019): 67-68; Zhang Fan, "Yijiayi dayuer? Shixi 'quanzhengfu' zai meiguo guojia anquan tizhizhong de yingyong [One plus one is greater than two? — an analysis on the application of "whole of government" in US national security system]," *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* [World Economics and Politics], No.8 (2019): 62-95.