Control by civilians

It is the same type of checks and balances that keep the control of the NSC in civilian hands. In addition to the civilian heads of departments, the director of National Intelligence and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff attend National Security Council meetings. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consists of the service chiefs of the four major branches of the United States military: the army, the navy, the air force, and the marine corps. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is one of the service chiefs and is appointed to his position after being nominated by the president and confirmed by the United States Senate. The chairman is the only non-civilian member who is a regular attendee of NSC meetings. The chairman attends the meetings in his capacity as the principal military advisor to the president of the United States.

All the service chiefs of the US military, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, report to the civilian secretary of defense, who in turn works for the president. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, though they are service chiefs, do not have any command authority over the US military. To separate military advice from military command authority, the US Congress passed a law known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Goldwater-Nichols ensures that the military chain of command in the United States runs firmly from the civilian president, to the civilian secretary of defense, directly to the military combatant commander in the theater of military operations. The service chiefs (Joint Chiefs of Staff) do not have any operational control over the US military and act, through the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in an advisory role to the president of the United States. This separation of military advice from military chain of command is one of the crucial mechanisms to safeguard civilian control of the military, and thereby national security affairs, in the United States.

But one thing that Pakistan and Turkey have in common is that they both face troubling external security environments.

A mixed record

In more than half a century of existence the US National Security Council has had a mixed history. Each American president has molded and used the National Security Council according to his own personal style. Some presidents, such as John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, made little use of the National Security Council, relying instead on ad-hoc policy making sessions and personal relationships with department heads. Still other presidents, such as Richard Nixon and George H. W. Bush, relied heavily on the council to gather information and shape national security policy.

Often the effectiveness of the council has depended on the strength of the national security advisor and the advisor's ability to balance the competing agendas and personalities of the secretary of defense and the secretary of state. Strong national security advisors, such as Henry Kissinger, have had significant influence in using the National Security Council to provide the president with national security policy options, although





