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Issue Brief

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Pakistan COAS Visit to Tajikistan: Opening up New Vistas

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Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa paid a three-day visit to Tajikistan from August 27-29, 2017 for participation in the Quadrilateral Counter Terrorism Coordination (QCTC) forum comprising Pakistan, China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. He met with Tajikistan President and thanked him for his support to Pakistan for the permanent membership of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Gen. Bajwa was of the view that Pakistan's membership of the SCO will give the country a wider and productive role in the issues concerning the region, and, more importantly, to bring peace in Afghanistan.

The QCTC was established in August 2016 in Urumqi by four countries including China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, to coordinate and support each other in areas of counter terrorism, intelligence sharing, anti-terrorist capacity building, joint anti-terrorist training and personnel training.

Speaking at a forum of the (QCTC) in Dushanbe, Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa stressed that terrorism being a transnational threat could only be defeated through intelligence sharing and coordinated effective border management. Gen. Bajwa highlighted the achievements of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism and the elimination of terrorist safe havens from the country's soil. Other participants at the meeting included senior military leadership of the member countries, including Gen. Li Zuocheng of China, Gen. Sobirzoda Imomali Abdurrahim of Tajikistan and Gen. Sharif Yaftali of Afghanistan. The four military leaders welcomed the QCTC initiative and expressed the hope that comprehensive and cooperative regional approach would prove best for the eradication of terrorism. Military leaders of China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan also agreed on cooperative mechanism to counter terrorism in the region.

Gen. Bajwa also met with the Afghan Chief of General Staff Sharif Yaftali and discussed the current Afghan situation. He has put forward an innovative suggestion to Gen. Yaftali that Pakistan and Afghanistan should form a Pak-Afghan Army Working Group to jointly work and prepare security recommendations for government-level discussions aimed at addressing mutual concerns. The



Afghan CGS has agreed to the proposal. While assuring fullest cooperation to Afghanistan, Gen. Bajwa said that Pakistan had already cleared all its areas indiscriminately and had started unilateral border security measures including fencing. Besides border security management, Gen. Bajwa also suggested

that a dignified repatriation of the Afghan refugees from Pakistan will be another enduring factor for peace. The COAS reassured the Afghan general that Pakistan was open to any suggestion that facilitated peace in Afghanistan.

The QCTC forum at Dushanbe discussed the regional security environment and the way forward in relation to the situation in Afghanistan and counterterrorism efforts. The participants also signed a cooperative mechanism which would come into force after its endorsement by the respective governments. The mechanism includes:

- Exchange of information.
- Building the capacity to combat terrorism.
- Conducting joint anti-terrorist exercises.
- Educational seminars.
- Making collective decisions on counter-terrorism strategy.

Coming at the heels of the visit to Tajikistan by the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif in July 2017, the current visit by the COAS is an important development. Meetings such as these with the Afghan and Chinese senior military officials will help to enhance Pakistan role to counter terrorism in the region.

Pakistan is becoming a proactive member and partner of the QCTC forum as it has high stakes in the region, particularly with the launch of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project under China's "One Belt One Road" initiative that will open up new opportunities for economic cooperation among the SCO members.