P.A. STOLYPIN INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

EXPERT-ANALYTICAL REPORT

Risks and Threats Across the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Region

Expert Survey Findings and Priority Areas for Joint Work

Prepared by the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Relations with International Organizations to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, jointly with the P.A. Stolypin Institute for Growth Economics

The survey brings the discussion of risks into a common frame of reference across the SCO space

101

Expert from SCO countries

>80% — academic, research and consulting sectors

Q1 — likelihood for the country: 1 “almost impossible” — 5 “almost certain”

Q2 — severity of impact: 1 “barely noticeable” — 5 “catastrophic”

69

Systemic risks

Assessed across 6 dimensions: likelihood, impact, resilience, SCO, peace, dynamics

Q3 — national resilience (positive scale): 1 “not at all capable” — 5 “fully capable”

Q4 — significance for the SCO: 1 “not significant at all” — 5 “critically significant”

Q1–Q6

Common scale

Q3 — resilience scale: higher score = greater resilience

Q5 — global significance: 1 “not significant at all” — 5 “critically significant”

Q6 — change in 5–10 years: –2 “decrease significantly” … +2 “increase significantly”; 0 — no change

Methodology: expert panel of SCO member states, forecasting horizon of 5–10 years

Five clusters of interconnected risks and threats

Systemic clustering of 69 risks along cascading chains of mutual influence

01 CLUSTER

Macroeconomic

Sanctions → settlements → inflation → energy and food; ageing and robotisation intensify pressure

Sanctions Q1 3,60 · Q2 3,32; Inflation Q2 3,68; Energy security Q5 3,90

02 CLUSTER

Digital

Cyberattacks, critical infrastructure, technological dependence and loss of control over AI

Cyberattacks Q1 3,73 · Q2 3,73; AI Q5 4,08 · Q6 +0,96

03 CLUSTER

Cognitive-anthropological

Disinformation → burnout → erosion of trust in society and institutions

Disinformation Q1 3,88; Burnout Q3 2,67; Ageing Q6 +0,96

04 CLUSTER

Natural resources

Climate shifts and water as a transboundary risk

Water Q4 3,70 · Q5 3,92 · Q6 +1,08; Climate Q6 +1,02

05 CLUSTER

Institutional

Mutual trust among members determines the SCO's capacity for joint action

Crisis of trust among members Q4 3,82; Trust in institutions Q3 3,02

The national perimeter is vulnerable when threats outpace preparedness. Top 10 Country-Level Risks

Top national threats: likelihood for your country (Q1), impact (Q2), protection index (Q3)

Threat	Q1	Q2	Q3
Disinformation	**3,88**	3,63	3,02
Cyberattacks	**3,73**	3,73	3,12
Mental health and burnout	3,65	3,51	**2,67 (minimum)**
Technological dependence	3,55	3,68	3,00
Sanctions pressure	3,60	3,32	3,25

Threat	Q1	Q2	Q3
Erosion of public trust	3,60	3,51	2,86
Crisis of trust in institutions	3,60	3,49	3,02
Inflation	3,41	3,68	3,11
Shortage of independent settlements	3,54	3,31	3,12
Critical infrastructure vulnerability	3,24	**3,78**	3,14

Top 10 national threats based on national assessments; Q1–Q3 are scales from a survey of 101 experts. Q3 is a positive scale: a score below 3,00 signals a critical shortfall in national protection mechanisms

For the SCO as an organisation, the key challenges are military conflicts on its borders and preserving trust

Threat significance rating for the organisation on the Q4 scale (1 — insignificant, 5 — critically significant)

Top 10 risks for the SCO	Q4 significance
Military conflicts on borders	**3,92**
Trust crisis among members	3,82
Terrorism	3,82
Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Proliferation	3,78
Drug trafficking	3,78
Religious extremism	3,78
Cyberattacks and digital divide	3,73
Water scarcity	3,70
Global economic crisis	3,70

Source: SCO expert survey (101 experts from 10 states)

KEY TAKEAWAY Q4

3,82

By importance, the risk of a trust crisis within the SCO is rated on a par with terrorism and ranks behind only external conflicts (3.92).

At the same time, experts currently rate the organization's stability as strong. This means that a key focus is maintaining this organizational stability. Preserving manageability and unity of positions becomes a basic condition for responding to shared risks.

Global top risks: threat scale (Q5) and growth dynamics (Q6)

Global risk	Q5 significance	Q6 dynamics
Loss of control over AI	**4,08**	+1,06
Religious extremism	4,02	+0,41
WMD	4,00	+0,33
Freshwater scarcity	3,92	**+1,08**
Cyberattacks	3,92	+0,81
Energy	3,90	+0,50
Terrorism	3,90	+0,38
International tensions	3,85	+0,36
Global economic crisis	3,85	+0,53

Water and AI show the fastest growth in threats over a ten-year horizon.

Q5 — global significance (1–5); Q6 — expected dynamics over 5–10 years (–2 to +2)

Q6 GROWTH OVER THE HORIZON 5–10 YEARS

- Water **+1,08**
- AI **+1,06**
- Climate **+1,02**
- Cognitive decline **+0,96**
- Job losses from automation **+0,96**

SCO Common Ground — Four Spheres Built Around Trust

Institutional trust and preventive coordination form the core that determines the capacity of sectoral frameworks

Cyber Shield

Collective protection of critical infrastructure, industrial system security and unified approaches to AI

Water and Environmental Partnership

Transboundary water use, climate strategy and water conservation

KEY CONDITION

Trust and Coordination

Institutional trust and preventive coordination as the basis for the effectiveness of all four spheres.

Macroeconomic and Resource Shield

Independent payment settlements, energy and food hubs, and workforce retraining

Human Capital

Mental health, cognitive security, education and the renewal of expertise

The architecture of practical measures was developed on the basis of threat clustering