RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND CONFESSIONAL SECURITY THROUGH THE EYES OF STUDENT YOUTH IN THE RUSSIAN PART
OF THE CASPIAN SEA REGION

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ABSTRACT

The issues of collective, cultural or, in some cases, religious identity have become an important factor for both confessional and societal security since the end of the last century. Such studies focus on specific societal communities or specific social spaces. The present article studies the student youth of the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region and focuses on the influence of the level of religious identity on the confessional security of student youth in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region. The starting point was regional studies of the past 10 years carried out by experts from the Republic of Kalmykia, Republic of Dagestan and Astrakhan Region. The purpose of this article is to identify the level of confessional security of the Russian student youth in the Caspian Sea region. For this purpose, sociological research was carried out in November and December 2020 among students of higher educational institutions in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region (N – 732). Primary sociological information was obtained through a handout electronic questionnaire using the Survey Studio service. The sampling error was up to 3%. The research tools and matrix were developed by the authors. A fairly high level of students' religiosity was revealed in the course of the study, mainly due to Dagestan and Kalmykia. The main factor in the formation of religious identity was the human and institutional factor, manifesting itself most clearly in Kalmykia, and the virtual one – in Dagestan. The study results showed that the youth of the Caspian Sea region is in tune for tolerance but does not feel sufficient reciprocal tolerance at both the national and regional levels. They consider their own educational institutions having the highest level of tolerance. Though they do not recognize the societal future of religion as a systemic regulator, the vast majority of students, both believers and non-believers, recognize it as a kind of guarantor of security.

Keywords: religion, identity, Caspian Sea region, confessional security, societal security, youth.

1. INTRODUCTION

With regard to the issues of security, not only (and sometimes not so much) interstate-scale problems but social ones, caused by both internal conflicts and external risks and threats, have come to the fore. Much of the understanding of this turn in security research is owed to the Copenhagen School [27, 29] and their concept of societal security. Despite the fact that the concept has both supporters [28, 36] and critics [31, 38], it is quite widespread. The authors of the article wrote about it in more detail earlier [17, 19]. The idea of societal security is based on the hypothesis that one of the main challenges

for modern society is a threat of transformation of the collective cultural identity of a modern person. The issue of identity has remained quite controversial in recent decades [39-44]. Such changes in identity occur due to a variety of reasons, mostly of social nature – migration, mobility, economic crises, and environmental disasters. The target of each study on societal security is a specific social space in a specific area. This space is considered as a group of communities with established collective identity. This identity can be both cultural, ethnic and confessional. It forms the basis of a so-called "societal community" (a term introduced by T. Parsons) with a common cultural or confessional orientation which it has

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to maintain in order to survive [13]. In case of violent attempts to destabilize this identity, the community starts reacting to these processes in various ways, including destructive ones. The concept of societal security has been used as a tool mainly in relation to European regions, most often - to the Baltics [35], but there are also examples of its application in some studies of other problematic, conflict areas [25, 26]. Analysis can focus on both the area as a whole and individual communities like, for example, Russian-speaking communities in the ex-Soviet Baltic republics [32]. When applied to European regions with the historical prevalence of Christianity and with allowance for modern multicultural processes caused by active migration, the main subject of the concept of societal security is communities primarily associated with collective cultural identity. Research in the field of societal security is often applied to communities that have collective cultural identity differing from the one of the majority, feel the pressure of autochthonous cultural identity, and, accordingly, make counter moves of pressure [20]. The authors assume that being a universal concept in a certain sense, it can be applied to other areas that can be perceived as a kind of integrity. This area can also cover some problem areas of Russia, especially that the concept of societal security has becoming of interest in Russia in recent times [16, 24]. The starting point in these areas can be both a specific type of identity and a specific area of security – cultural, economic or environmental. However, there are areas where collective cultural identity, cemented by Russian and then Soviet culture for a long time, turned into a complex mosaic structure after the USSR collapse, where the confessional component, which is often interconnected with ethnicity, became the main collective identity of the communities. In particular, the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region is an area of this kind; there, the state of confessional identity, especially the one of the younger generation, is an important factor for preserving security.

2. RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF STUDENT YOUTH IN THE CASPIAN CONFESSIONAL SPACE: REGIONAL STUDIES

The term "Caspian Sea region" began to enter scientific discourse in the 18th century - Russian geographers used it to designate the areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea region is conventionally divided into four parts oriented with respect to the cardinal directions. In the present article, the authors study the identity processes in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region which includes a part of the Northern Caspian region, represented by the Astrakhan Region and the Republic of Kalmykia, and a part of the Western Caspian region, represented by the Republic of Dagestan. What is unique in this area is that three world religions have been historically represented and are being developed here nowadays. Despite the fact that the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region (RPCR) has not been immune to the general globalization and multiconfessional processes of the religious landscape transformation, the proportion of the three world religions represented there is still preserved. Let us try to characterize its youth student - and, therefore, promising - component, based on the regional scientific discourse. The oldest world religion - Buddhism - is represented mainly in the Republic of Kalmykia, although a small number of Buddhists also live in Astrakhan. Since Buddhism, in one way or another, has been historically associated with the Kalmyk ethnicity, the confessional landscape of the Republic of Kalmykia largely depends on the ethnic composition of the population. While the 1959 census in the republic showed that the Kalmyks accounted for 35.10% and Russians - 55.91% (which is associated with the preceding tragic historical events of the Kalmyk deportations), in 2010 the number was 56.2% for the Kalmyks and 29.6% for Russians [7]. Changes in the ethnic proportion have factored to changes in the youth religious landscape. This is connected with the religious identity of modern students. Intensification of regional research in the religious identity of students has also indicated the importance of studying this factor. It is conducted by various research teams quite regularly, mainly with the use of quantitative sociological methods; some of these studies are local and cover Kalmykia [2], others compare it with other Buddhist regions of Russia - Tuva and Buryatia [4]. According to a sociological survey conducted by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2014 in the Volga, North Caucasus, Central and Southern Federal Districts (N - 300), the share of Kalmyks among the student youth was 72.2% - slightly higher than in the whole region following the census, which indicates the aging of ethnic Russians of Kalmykia, among other things. 63% of the respondents consider themselves Buddhists, 14.3% consider themselves both ethnic Russians and Orthodox Christians at the same time. The share of Muslims in the student community of Kalmykia is minimum - within 2% [6]. Recent studies in the religious identity of the Kalmyk students have shown that Buddhism is an integral part of Russian history for 75.3% of the respondents [4], although this does not guarantee their historical literacy in this field. For many Kalmyks, Buddhism "today is not only a powerful ethno-consolidating factor but also a means of entering the forefront of world culture" [12]. The Republic of Dagestan is a Caspian bordering region with the prevalence of the Islamic population. While about 20% of ethnic Russians lived in Dagestan in 1959, later this indicator steadily decreased and was 4.69% in 2002, reaching 3.6% in 2010 [9]. Of course, this also influenced the proportion of the confessional composition of the population. Since it is not possible to operate with absolute numbers in relation to confessional affiliation due to the fact that this component is not taken into account in population censuses, one can talk about relative numbers and, first of all, in relation to student youth, a specific segment of the population that is the most studied in this area. The presence of a certain share

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of the Russian non-Muslim population allowed Dagestan to position itself as a multiconfessional region. Recently, however, it has almost turned into a region with a clear dominance of the Muslim population. Moreover, the dynamics of growth - from 22.5% in 1999 to 71.5% in 2011 - of religious Muslim identification among the youth of Dagestan is very impressive [1]. According to the data of other sociological surveys, 80-90% of respondents declare their adherence to Islam [15]. Latest studies, carried out by Yu.D. Dzhabrailov, a researcher at the Dagestan Federal Research Centre RAS, in 2020, showed that the majority of the Dagestani student youth consider themselves believers: among the respondents (N - 565), 88% recognize themselves as Muslims, 3% - as Christians, and 1% - as agnostics and atheists [8]. Moreover, Islam in Dagestan is seen as an ethnic tradition and part of the national culture [1], although it is not homogeneous at the moment. According to sociological studies, despite the fact that the Dagestanis feel the greatest togetherness with their comrades in faith (62.5%) [8], they are generally quite tolerant of the adherents of different faith, and 81.9% are ready to accept a different-faith adherent as a boss, 89.4% - as a colleague, 91.8% - as a neighbour, 77.8% - as a friend, but only a quarter of the respondents agree to accept them into the family [8]. However, despite the high level of manifested tolerance, the results of a sociological study conducted in the Republic of Dagestan among the younger generation (aged from 18 to 25) in 2017, which covered 1,220 respondents, showed that only 9.1% of the young people surveyed consider the religious situation in Dagestan as peaceful [11], which indicates a recorded low level of confessional security. As for the Astrakhan Region, it has historically developed as a multiconfessional area. Ethnic Russians historically dominated in the Astrakhan Region, but their number has been steadily declining, which is seen through comparison of the population censuses of recent decades: in 1989, ethnic Russians accounted for 71.9%, in 2002 - 69.6%, in 2010 - 67.6%. The share of the Tatars, another historical ethnic group in this region, also decreased, while the share of the Kazakhs and other peoples - mainly Caucasian ones - that are adherents of the Islamic faith, increased. In terms of the confessional composition, the data of the Astrakhan Statistical Committee show that the ratio of believers as of the end of the 19th century was as follows: 63.8% for Orthodox Christians, 25.1% for Buddhists, 7.8% for Muslims [18]. According to the predicted data of regional researchers, an approximate ratio of the believers in the region in 2004 was the following: Orthodox Christians accounted for 30%, Muslims - 25%, Buddhists - 1%, non-believers - 40% [5]. Studies conducted by the authors in 2015 among the Astrakhan students showed the following stratification: Orthodox Christians accounted for 45.1%, Muslims - 30.6%, Buddhists - 2.3% [22]. The overall level of religiosity was 65.3% [22]. In general, studies on the religious identity of youth, conducted by the authors of the article in the Astrakhan Region within the framework of various projects in 2015 [37] and 2018 [33] with a sample size of 433 and 350 respondents respectively, demonstrated a declining trend – from 65.3% to 56.8% - in the number of respondents aged 18 to 25 who identify themselves as people practising any religion. Since the article size is limited, the authors' analysis given above covers only a part of the results of regional studies on the religious identity of student youth. However, all of them are highly localized, while there are almost no comprehensive studies covering the entire Russian part of the Caspian Sea region. Recently, however, the region of interest has become an important geopolitical area, a "canary in a coal mine" of stability and security both in Southern Russia and in the whole Caspian macroregion. If taking into account the role of confessional identity in the system of societal security and the importance of the youth student stratum in ensuring the regional security in the long run, it becomes clear that the situation requires 360-degree analysis.

3. OBJECTIVE AND TASKS OF THE STUDY

The **main objective** is to identify the level of confessional security of the Russian student youth in the Caspian Sea region. The following research tasks were addressed in furtherance of the objective:

● to compare the confessional composition of student youth in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region;

● to identify the main factors in the formation of the religious identity of student youth in the region;

● to identify the level of tolerance and confessional security among young people in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region.

3.1. Study methods and procedure

A quantitative sociological survey, conducted in November and December 2020 in order to identify the level of confessional security of student youth in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region, was the main study method. The selected regions were the Astrakhan Region, Republic of Kalmykia, and Republic of Dagestan. The target of the study was 732 students of higher educational institutions of the abovementioned regions. The scope of the present sociological study is the factors of the formation of religious identity and the level of confessional security of student youth in the region under study. The sociological method used was a survey in the form of a handout electronic questionnaire (quantitative method). Primary sociological information was obtained through handout electronic questionnaires using the Survey Studio service. The sampling error was up to 3%. The research tools and matrix were developed by the authors. The gender distribution was 32.2% for the male respondents and 67.8% for the female respondents. The sample was purposive and was drawn by the method of typical representatives; the main selection criteria were the region of residence, age and gender. The obtained

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data were processed and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21 package.

4. STUDY RESULTS

The starting point of the authors' study (like, indeed, of many of their colleagues' studies) was the question about the level of religiosity of modern students in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region. Answering the question "Do you consider yourself a person who practises any religion?", the majority of students who participated in the survey answered that they practise

religion (65.4%). 34.6% of the respondents said they do not consider themselves to be adherents of any religion. However, a relatively high level of religiosity in the geographical area under study is ensured by almost mono-confessional regions of the Republic of Dagestan (80.6%) and the Republic of Kalmykia (71.5%). As for the Astrakhan Region, it shows the lowest level of religiosity, and according to the authors' previous studies in 2015, 2018 and 2019 [33], it has been steadily decreasing from 65.3% in 2015 to 56.4% in 2020, i.e. by almost 10%. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Level of young people's religiosity in the regions

Question	Possible answers	(%) overall	Astrakhan Region	Dagestan	Kalmykia
Do you consider yourself a person who practises any religion?	Yes	65.4	56.4	80.6	71.5
	No	34.6	43.6	19.4	28.5

Based on the data obtained, it should be noted that in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region, slightly more than half of the respondents (50.9%) practise Islam, Christians account for 25.4%, and Buddhists – 16.9%. Despite the fact that there are some Buddhist associations in the Astrakhan Region, they were not represented

among the respondents: in the present study, the students practising Buddhism are represented only in the Republic of Kalmykia. The largest share of Christians is seen only in the Astrakhan Region, and they do not make up an absolute majority in the region (48.2%). Islam holds strong positions in two of the three regions (see Table 2).

Table 2. RPCR student youth breakdown by confession

Question	Possible answers	(%) overall	Astrakhan Region	Dagestan	Kalmykia
What religion or worldview do you practise?	Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy)	24.4	46.9	0.7	9.3
	Christianity (Catholicism)	0.6	0.9	-	0.9
	Christianity (Protestantism)	0.4	0.4	-	0.9
	Islam	50.9	44.7	94.5	5.6
	Buddhism	16.9	-	-	75.0
	Judaism	0.2	-	0.7	-
	Agnosticism	0.8	0.9	-	1.9
	I believe in God but do not affiliate myself with any religion	4.4	5.3	2.1	5.6
	I do not believe in God	0.4	0.4	0.7	-
	Other (please specify)	0.8	0.4	1.4	0.9

Along with the religiosity level, the authors were also interested in the influence of various factors on the

formation of the religious identity among student youth (see Table 3)

Table 3. Factors of religious identity formation

Question	Possible answers	(%) overall	Astrakhan Region	Dagestan	Kalmykia
What has the biggest impact on your religious identity? (up to 3 options to choose)	Family	52.6	58.1	43.8	55.2
	Friends	13.3	10.0	17.4	13.6
	Educational institution	5.1	3.3	5.5	7.8
	Mass media	0.6	0.3	1.3	0

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	Internet	2.5	1.7	5.1	0
	Religious websites and blogs	4.3	4.7	6.8	0
	Clergy	6.4	5.6	4.7	10.4
	Not sure	15.2	16.3	15.3	13.0

Analyzing the answers, the authors selected the following spheres of influence which can be conventionally classified into:

● Human factor – family, friends;

● Institutional factor – educational institution, clergy;

● Virtual factor – mass media, Internet, religious websites and blogs.

In all three regions, the primary values are family - 52.6% (core value) and friends - 13.3%. Despite the relatively high religiosity in the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region, the respondents say the clergy has almost no influence on the formation of their religious identity (the highest level of their influence - 10.4% - is recorded in Kalmykia). Educational institutions have an equally low level of influence. Russian sociologist A.V. Anikina is of a similar view; having conducted a study, she came to the conclusion that "family of origin is one of the factors in the religious upbringing of young people, but it cannot ensure the churching of the younger generation" [3]. Another Russian researcher E.I. Ufimtseva believes that "family serves a significant function in religious education of the younger generation" [23]. Foreign religious scholars also share the opinion that it is the family that plays one of the main roles in forming the religiosity of their children. For example [34], E. Roostin thinks that the religious beliefs received by a child during his/her upbringing in the family are fundamental for further formation of his/her religious identity [34]. Examining the role of parents in forming religiosity of children aged 13 to 19, M.A. Goodman and W.J. Dyer consider that the religious beliefs of parents are "one of the most important factors in forming religiosity of the younger generation" [30]. It should be noted that in Goodman and Dyer's study, the transmission of religious beliefs was most noticeable in the families with a high level of family religious practices, as well as among adolescents who are more physiologically sensitive to the environment, among other factors.

Therefore, it is seen that the human factor has the biggest influence on the formation of the religious identity of RPCR youth, as well as on Russian and foreign youth in general. Paradoxical as it may sound, the lowest level of family influence - 43.8% - is recorded in Dagestan, the most religious region, and the largest number - 58.1% - is seen among the least religious Astrakhan students. In general, the influence of the human factor in Dagestan is leveled out by the friendship networking and has the highest level across the region under study. The institutional factor of influence generally demonstrates small numbers and has the biggest impact in Kalmykia, perhaps because of the abovementioned connection between ethnicity and religiosity. The virtual factor is the most influential in almost mono-confessional Dagestan, perhaps because transnational virtual networks are the most developed in Islam, and has no impact in Kalmykia. It is also important to note that almost every sixth respondent chose the answer "Not sure", perhaps because they found it hard to differentiate the factors of influence.

The vast majority of the responding students (93.6%) answered positively to the question "Are there friends or acquaintances in your environment who practise any religion or hold a certain worldview?" This result confirms the high prevalence of religion in modern Russian society, including the young part of the population. Analysing the respondents' answers to the question whether they pay attention to religious affiliation of their relatives, friends and acquaintances, it is necessary to note insignificant differences regarding the subject of focus. Representatives of student youth pay more attention to the religious affiliation of their relatives (50.7%) than to the one of their friends and acquaintances (42.5%). Again, it underlines the importance of the family factor in forming the religious identity of the younger generation. It is seen that the overall balance of the respondents' answers to this question is almost at equal levels, with a discrepancy of 8.2%.

The answers to this question indicate formation of a transitional model in the form of control over the religious affiliation of the social environment, which, in its turn, may indicate the blurring of religious boundaries between society members, especially among students (see Table 4). Based on the distribution of the answers by region, it can be said that the respondents from the Astrakhan Region pay attention to the religious identity of relatives least of all (46.1%), while most of all it is paid in Kalmykia (57.6%), perhaps due to the multiconfessional nature of Astrakhan. It is also worth noting that the biggest discrepancy in the answers (religious affiliation of relatives and friends) is observed exactly among the Kalmyk respondents (11.2%), while the smallest one (6.7%) - among the Astrakhan respondents.

Table 4. Respondents' paying attention to religious affiliation of their relatives, friends, and acquaintances (%)

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	Pay attention	Pay no attention
Religious affiliation of their relatives	50.7	49.3
Religious affiliation of their friends and acquaintances	42.5	57.5

In support the above conclusions, analysis of the sociological study data revealed that the vast majority of the respondents (81.4%) do not consider religion an important factor in building friendly relations between people. Only 18.5% of the respondents consider religion an important factor in building friendly relations. In this context, the religious factor manifests itself most often in Dagestan (31.7%), least often - in the Astrakhan Region (13.7%), which, in the authors' opinion, is associated with the confessional environment in each of the regions.

In order to assess the state of societal and confessional security, it is important to determine the level of tolerance in the region's youth environment. It is impossible to understand the nature of relations between the followers of different religions without this indicator. The absolute majority of the survey participants (90.7%) answered negatively to the question "Do you experience unfriendly attitudes because of a particular religion or worldview you practise?", which may indicate a tolerant attitude towards various forms of religions and other different forms of worldviews anchored in the individual and mass consciousness of people, and its further adaptation in social practices.

If talking about the landscape of intolerance, the largest increase in the level of intolerance is felt by RPCR youth in the country as a whole (51.1%), next comes the region of residence – 40.2%, with educational institutions having the most tolerant environment (see Table 5).

Table 5. Intolerance level

	Definitely believe there's an increase	Rather believe there's an increase	Rather believe there's no increase	Definitely believe there's no increase
In the country of residence	31.0	20.1	24.0	24.9
In the region of residence	24.2	16.0	26.6	33.2
In the educational institution	21.6	9.2	25.3	44.0

Based on the distribution of the answers by religion, the largest number of positive answers about the growth of intolerance is observed, however, among representatives of Islam (61.4% in the country of residence, 41% in the region of residence, and 33.2% in the educational institution). As for other confessions, the intolerance level does not exceed 47% in all three indicators, i.e. only half of the respondents feel secure at all three levels.

However, most of the respondents themselves (72.8%) demonstrated their tolerance towards other confessions, expressing their disagreement with the fact that, demanding respect for their religion or worldview, representatives of other religions or worldviews thereby oppress the religious beliefs of other people. For many of them (76.7%), exercising religion is a guarantor of

security. Moreover, this indicator is higher than the level of manifested religiosity (65.4%).

Analysis of the respondents' answers to the question "Do you think that religion today does not play a significant role in the life of modern youth?" shows that the majority of the respondents from the entire sampling frame of the study (60.7%) expressed their agreement with this statement. However, additional analysis, conducted with the use of the tables of contingency between the issue under consideration and socio-demographic variables – the region of residence and religious affiliation – allowed to find out that the largest number of positive answers (75.4%) about an insignificant role of religion in the life of today's youth is observed among Christians. On the contrary, representatives of Islam believe that religion plays a very prominent role in their lives (see Table 6).

Table 6. Role of religion in the life of today's youth

Question	Possible answers	(%) Total	Christianity	Islam	Buddhism
Do you think that religion today does not play a significant role in the life of modern youth?	Definitely yes	28.1	29.5	12.7	21.0
	Rather yes	32.7	45.9	25.4	48.1
	Rather no	23.4	15.6	36.1	19.8
	Definitely no	15.8	9.0	25.8	11.1

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To conclude the analysis of the conducted study data, it can be noted that religion still maintains a stable position in society and is a kind of guarantor of security, but at the same time, a tendency for the weakening of the influence of traditional religions on public life (23.8%) or even their turning into atavism (15.3%) in the opinion of student youth is revealed (see Table 7).

Table 7. Religious situation in modern Russia

Question	Possible answers	(%) overall	Astrakhan Region	Dagestan	Kalmykia
What do you think will happen to the religious situation in modern Russia?	The influence of religions on social life will increase	13.8	10.2	23.2	11.9
	The influence of religions on social life will decrease	23.8	24.7	22.8	22.5
	Traditional religious institutions will turn into atavism (vestige of the past)	15.3	19.2	9.4	11.9
	Virtual forms of religion will become popular	3.6	3.5	2.2	5.3
	Not sure	43.6	42.4	42.2	48.3

There is also a big number of respondents in all the regions under survey who found it difficult to answer this question. Perhaps this is due to the growing religious indifference among Russian youth. Some Russian researchers associate this phenomenon with "the loss of the traditional pattern of family life" [21], others – with the weak influence of both religion itself and religious institutions on student youth [10]. Sociologist T.S. Tronina states that religion is present in the lives of most Russians at the level of formality and has no effect on the level of beliefs and religious knowledge: "With a high level of religiosity declared, we have a secular lifestyle, and we are guided by secular models of behaviour and activity in our daily life" [14].

CONCLUSION

So, the multiconfessional student youth of the Russian part of the Caspian Sea region demonstrates a fairly high level of religiosity, primarily due to Islam and Buddhism, strongly represented in the area, i.e. in those regions where confessional markers confirm and complement the ethnic status. The religious identity of RPCR youth is primarily formed by the human factor and inner circle, which is a traditional diachronic factor for all historical religions. Despite the fact that a significant part of young people does not think that religion as a system-forming factor has a societal future, they see a certain guarantee of security in religion, even those who do not consider themselves believers. Even in almost mono-Islamic Dagestan, only 23.2% of the respondents believe that the influence of religion on social life will increase. Therefore, it can be assumed that religion, from the viewpoint of young people, will go to the private, family level, at which the main features of the religious identity of the younger generation are being formed now, i.e. it will turn into a kind of moral guarantor in the Kantian sense.

In general, having shown a sufficiently high level of tolerance and recognizing that those practising a different religion do not harm the faith of others and have the right for it, young people do not feel reciprocal tolerance in Russian society. Half of the respondents believe that the level of intolerance is growing, first of all, in the country as a whole, and only secondly – in the region. Educational institutions are becoming a relative stronghold of tolerance in society, where different nationalities and religions are present as a result of active mobility. However, having turned into providers of educational services, educational institutions (both higher and vocational) have missed the factors of worldview influence.

At the moment, with the youth mobility between regions being minimized and the economy being in stagnation, the collective confessional identity is under pressure – if it is – either from the society as a whole, as it is shown in the authors' study, or from the regional societal communities, as shown in studies of the authors' colleagues. Each region occupies its own niche in the interfaith relations, associated with its historical roots. In general, RPCR is a sort of a tripod in the religious sphere, which stabilizes the whole structure. However, it is important to take into account that even these days the proportion of the three world religions represented in RPCR has changed compared to the last century, and given the entire area of the Caspian Sea region, this can hardly be called a tripod. Active steps in the development of collective regional projects, like the creation of a Caspian hub or others related to mobility and transformation of the Caspian community, which are extremely important for the future of the region, particularly for young people, can lead to shifts in the already established relations in the interregional community. Moreover, these shifts can be both positive and negative. In this case, the concept of societal security provides a methodology for understanding the prospects of transformation of the situation and its consequences.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Dmiriy Chernichkin – formulating the problem, analysis of the research results, writing a major portion of the paper.

Mikhail Topchiev – collecting the data, literature review, wording of the conclusion.

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