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Influences of Recent Crises in the European Space on the Exercise of Certain Rights and Citizen Duties in Romania: A Sustainable Perspective Approach

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Abstract: Purpose: The highlighting of how current security issues (the economic crisis at the European/global level and the military crisis in Ukraine)—seen as factors of negative influence on sustainable development at the societal level—influence the level of willingness of young citizens (aged 18–35) in Romania, regarding the acceptance of restrictions/limitations on certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the fulfillment of certain constitutional obligations in exceptional situations. It was considered opportune to conduct this study, given the fact that since the end of World War II, the European continent has not experienced such major security issues that combine specific aspects of military security with those specific to human security, and that generate negative effects on the community’s efforts to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Methods: The study was based on an online questionnaire administered to a total of 826 individuals permanently residing in Romania, aged between 18 and 35. The data were collected from 1 October to 15 October 2022, at a reasonable interval following the onset of the mentioned crises, assuming that the opinions of the interviewed individuals regarding their negative impact on sustainable development from the perspective of internal societal life are well-formed. The methods used include statistical analysis and focused on identifying and assessing the degree of acceptability of restrictions/limitations on certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the willingness to fulfill certain constitutional obligations. Additionally, empirical research on the issue was conducted in accordance with the available bibliography. Results: The study reveals the respondents’ level of perception regarding the impact on sustainable development of society, from an economic perspective, social well-being (41.33%), and citizen safety (53.26%), as a result of the global/European economic crisis. The consequences of this are strongly felt among the interviewed population (61.09%), leading to a decrease in their trust in the state authorities’ ability to manage the situation. The cause of the global/European economic crisis is complex, a large part of the respondents (41.21%) believing that it is the result of a globally orchestrated conspiracy to reset the international order and reconfigure the poles of power, and more than 50% of the respondents considering the conflict in Ukraine as the main source. A percentage of 29.28% of the respondents consider that social solidarity at the level of the European Union (EU) is feasible to overcome the negative influences of multiple crises on domestic societal life, and 49.51% of the respondents believe that Romania’s EU membership is likely to contribute substantially to limiting the negative effects of the crisis in Ukraine. The restriction/limitation of certain fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, as possible extreme measures for managing the effects of the mentioned crises at the national level, is accepted by a small percentage of respondents (15–20%), while the willingness to fulfill certain constitutional obligations of citizens is present in approximately one-third of the interviewed population. Conclusions: In the context of the new global/European economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine, which impact the sustainable development of society and the community’s efforts to promote peaceful societies, young citizens in Romania (aged 18–35) are deeply concerned about the preservation of fundamental rights and freedoms as stipulated in the Constitution of Romania. They demonstrate a low level of acceptance for the restriction/limitation of these rights and freedoms, even in exceptional situations of an economic or military nature. The same low degree of readiness is also found in the fulfillment of some



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fundamental constitutional duties of the citizens (loyalty to the country, defense of the country, etc.), in the case of adopting exceptional measures in the event of extending the military conflict in Ukraine.

Keywords: security; rights; freedoms; duties; crisis; conflict; Romania

1. Introduction

The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century has been characterized by the emergence of new problematic security situations, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the European/global economic crisis, and the military crisis caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The individual or cumulative effects have a negative impact on the sustainability of society at a global level, primarily in terms of significant disruptions to two fundamental defining pillars: economic development and the well-being of citizens.

The study aims to demonstrate that current security issues (the European/global economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine) influence both the perception of the respondents regarding the sustainability of Romanian society and the level of willingness among young citizens in Romania (aged 18–35) to accept the restriction/limitation of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as to fulfill certain constitutional obligations in exceptional situations caused by the mentioned crises. Such attitudes have the potential to impact the efforts of Romanian authorities in developing a sustainable society.

1. Literature Review

Specialized studies highlight that the declaration by the World Health Organization, in March 2020, of the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a new existential reality characterized by the affectation (temporary diminution or removal, as a result of governmental measures) of some fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens [1], such as: the right to information, education, culture, etc., the right to a healthy environment and health protection, the free movement of persons or freedom of assembly, the right to work, and social protection or economic freedom, which have negatively influenced the standard of living of the citizens ([2], pp. 31–47), and was likely to significantly affect some of the indicators of the sustainable development goals found in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ASD), adopted at the UN Development Summit in September 2015 [3]. The novelty of this security risk for humanity (pandemic crisis) [4] and the consequences for the health of the population [5] were at the origin of the voluntary or imposed acceptance, at least in the early phase of the pandemic, of the temporary curtailment, limitation, or removal of some of their fundamental rights and freedoms [6].

The pandemic crisis, which has forced many of the world's countries to severely restrict their economic activities, keeping only the strictly necessary services operational, has also represented the onset of a global economic crisis [7–9], the manifestations and developments of which are present, especially in the energy and food sectors, on the European continent (including Romania [10,11]), fundamentally affecting the desire to promote a “sustained economic growth, open to all and sustainable, full and productive employment of the labor force” [3] and the standard of living of the population, being at the origin of social convulsions [12].

Public rhetoric about the new global economic crisis [13,14] is diverse and contradictory, with many voices raising conspiracy theories that it is the result of an orchestrated conspiracy to reset the international order and reconfigure the poles of power [15]. The solutions put forward by the leaders of some international organizations, according to which the economic crisis can be managed through individual or collective sacrifices that may affect the standard of living of the population [16], including by accepting the limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, seem to be no longer accepted and may represent the seeds of actions that may affect the stability of the continental security

equation [17,18], being in discord with the global action program in the field of universal development, found in the ASD.

It is also worth mentioning the European and global security effects of the military crisis caused by the “special military operation” undertaken in Ukraine by the Russian Federation (as an expression of the general Russian revisionist attitude), starting on 24 February 2022, which is still in full swing, has amplified the economic crisis [19–21] and has created the preconditions for the reconfiguration of the security architecture at the global level [22–24]. The political, economic, and security consequences of the crisis in Ukraine [25–27] reveal that since the end of World War II, the European continent has not experienced such major security issues that combine specific aspects of military security with those related to human security. We find ourselves in a situation where the objectives of sustainable development at the societal level [28,29] are fundamentally affected, particularly the blatant violation of the objective of “Peace, justice, and strong institutions”, which advocates for “promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and establishing effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels” [3]. This context raises questions about the fulfillment of the assumed objectives [30].

Recent developments in the conflict in Ukraine have brought into question the possibility of adopting, in exceptional circumstances, measures that may affect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, or which are circumscribed by the fundamental duties of citizens (loyalty to the country, defense of the country, etc.) ([2], pp. 54–55). One of the aims of this study is to determine the extent to which the public can accept these measures, given that since the beginning of the 21st century we have been witnessing a global “decline in the acceptance of state legitimacy” and “voluntary obligations” towards state authorities [31].

The research framework of this study is centered around the need to interconnect theories/concepts/perspectives found in the specialized literature regarding the effects of the mentioned crises on societal parameters. It also encompasses the authors’ research efforts aimed at validating the research hypothesis.

2. Research hypothesis

The hypothesis of this research starts from the fact that current security issues (the European/global economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine) negatively influence the respondents’ perception of the sustainability of Romanian society. They develop feelings of uncertainty, concern, fear, and insecurity, which lead to different behaviors in terms of individual expression, such as accepting the restriction/limitation of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, or fulfilling certain constitutional obligations in exceptional situations mentioned.

Specifically, it is presumed that:

1. Current security issues (the European/global economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine) negatively influence the degree of acceptability regarding the restriction/limitation of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the willingness to fulfill certain fundamental obligations.
2. Individuals with higher education exhibit higher levels of acceptability regarding the restriction of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the willingness to fulfill fundamental obligations, compared to those with secondary education.
3. Individuals residing in rural areas show higher levels of acceptability regarding the restriction of certain fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the willingness to fulfill fundamental obligations, compared to those residing in urban areas.
4. In the context of current security issues (the European/global economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine), the willingness of citizens to exercise certain fundamental rights and obligations can have significant implications for societal sustainability.

The theoretical foundation of the research hypothesis is based on the objective analysis of the specialized literature relevant to the addressed issue, as presented earlier.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The study is based on the administration of an online questionnaire, conducted from 1 October to 15 October 2022, with a total of 826 adult participants from Romania. Any individual with a permanent residence in Romania, aged between 18 and 35, was eligible to participate in completing the questionnaire.

The selection of the 18–35-year-old sample for respondents was carried out in accordance with the vision of the Romanian Ministry of National Defense regarding the improvement of the country's defense capacity, according to which "Romanian citizens, men and women, with permanent domicile in Romania, between the ages of 18 and 35 (...) will be able to participate on a voluntary basis, in a basic military training program" [32].

Participation in the survey was voluntary, anonymous and unpaid. No data were collected on respondents' identifiers. In the preamble of the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the authors of the study, their affiliation, the purpose of the study, and the source of funding for the research.

2.2. Procedure

The study participants received a questionnaire built on the Google Forms platform, which was distributed nationally, in all regions of Romania, through the Facebook social network. Moreover, the link was posted on various sites with a large number of visitors. Completion of the questionnaire was conditional on the affirmative answer "Yes" to the question regarding permanent residence in Romania and age between 18 and 35 years. The aim was to cover all geographical regions of Romania.

2.3. Measurements

The questionnaire comprised 27 questions and was structured in two parts:

1. Obtaining socio-demographic data (age, residence, education, county of residence) and opinion on the economic situation, social well-being and safety of Romanian citizens, as objectives of the ASD, necessary for the sustainability of society, as a result of the individual or cumulative influences of the crises we reported (economic and military);
2. Identifying the degree of acceptability of restricting/limiting certain fundamental rights and freedoms and the willingness to fulfil certain fundamental duties of citizens in exceptional situations caused by the crises mentioned, that affect sustainable development at the societal level.

2.4. Statistical Analysis of Data

The processing of the data obtained from the questionnaire was carried out using Excel, part of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2021 (v. 2305), and IBM SPSS Statistics 26, installed on a Windows 11 Professional operating system.

The collected data were centralized in an Excel file and then visualized, extracted and statistically analyzed.

The variables used for the analysis were the participants' opinions on:

3. The influences of the global/European economic crisis on the perception of the impact on the economic situation, social well-being, and citizen safety in Romania, seen as objectives of sustainable development in society;
4. Influences of the military conflict in Ukraine on perceptions of quality of life, social welfare, and security (from a military perspective) of Romanian citizens, viewed from the previously mentioned perspective;
5. Influences of the economic crisis and the military crisis, seen as factors that negatively affect sustainability and sustainable development at the societal level, on the degree of acceptability of restricting certain fundamental rights and freedoms, and the willingness to fulfill certain fundamental duties by young citizens in Romania, in exceptional military situations.

The Chi-square test was used to determine the degree of association.

The questionnaire allowed us to extract a dataset that we analyzed statistically, and to determine the degree of correlation between selected variables, we used the Pearson statistical test. This way, we could observe if there is any significant correlation between different variables and the participants' decision to accept or not accept the limitation of certain rights and freedoms or the fulfillment of certain obligations.

3. Results

The questionnaire was administered to 826 people, their socio-demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic data of respondents.

Age -Q1-	Sex -Q2-				Environment of Residence -Q3-				Educational Level -Q4-							
	Female		Male		Urban		Rural		High School		Faculty		Masters		PhD.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18–20	268	62.21	156	36.79	266	62.59	159	37.41	343	80.71	81	19.06	0	0	0	0
21–35	251	48.36	151	49.19	262	61.64	139	38.36	52	19.29	230	80.94	93	100	30	100
Total	519	62.83	307	37.17	528	64.1	298	35.9	395	47.59	311	37.4	93	11.2	30	3.6

Note: 1. The processing of the results according to the two age categories was based on the vision of the national legislation in the field of the preparation of the Romanian population for defense [33], which stipulates that “upon the declaration of mobilization and of a state of war or the establishment of a state of siege, the performance of military service as a serving soldier becomes compulsory for men aged between 20 and 35 who meet the criteria for military service”, while the law does not apply to adults aged in the sample (18–20). 2. Although the level of the study is complex, requiring a high level of knowledge from the respondents regarding certain security issues, the questionnaire did not include indicators related to the socioeconomic status (SES) of the respondents, which could provide insights into their knowledge and ability to answer the questions correctly.

(a) General approach. The research shows a representative sample of respondents who have been directly affected, to a large and very large extent, by the global economic crisis since 2020 (41.3%), with the consequences being seriously felt by the population surveyed (61.09%) (Table 2; Q5, Q6). The problem analyzed is circumscribed by the “No poverty” and “Zero hunger” objectives found in the ASD [3].

In this context, the degree of confidence of the respondents in the state authorities regarding the way to manage the current problematic situation (Table 2; Q7) is very low (72.35%). It should be noted that 53.26% of the respondents consider that the major economic problems Romania is facing, in the context of the multiple crises in Europe, are likely to affect its national security and sustainable development, to a large and very large extent (Table 2; Q8).

Table 2. Perception and consequences of the global economic crisis (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q5	Pandemic effects on economic crisis	8.31	20.00	30.36	24.58	16.75
Q6	Effect of the economic crisis	2.53	9.40	26.99	36.87	24.22
Q7	Correct management of the economic situation by the Romanian authorities	40.48	31.87	16.02	6.07	5.66
Q8	National security concerns due to the economic situation	3.98	11.69	31.08	34.22	19.04

In the context of a diverse and controversial rhetoric about the causes of the global/European economic crisis, the idea that it is the result of a globally orchestrated conspiracy to reset the international order and reconfigure the poles of power is shared by respondents to a large and very large extent by 41.21 percent. Note also that a very low percentage of respondents think that the media correctly present the consequences of the

global economic crisis also affecting Romania (14.8%), while a high number of respondents express the opposite opinion (63.3%) (Table 3; Q10).

Table 3. Perception of the causes and media coverage of the global economic crisis (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q9	The European/global economic crisis is due to a global conspiracy to reset the world order	19.28	11.69	27.83	21.45	19.76
Q10	Media objectivity on the economic crisis	30.12	33.13	21.93	9.52	5.30

Regarding the causality of the economic crisis manifesting itself at the European/global level, 54.82% of respondents consider the conflict in Ukraine, caused by the “special military operation” undertaken by the Russian Federation, as the source of the crisis to a large and very large extent, while 21.81% do not share this idea (Table 4; Q11). On the other hand, 56.35% of respondents (Table 4; Q12) believe that the Russian Federation’s operation was largely or very largely aimed at creating a global economic crisis, while 51.21% (Table 4; Q13) believe that the invasion of Ukraine is a premeditated action aimed at resetting the world order.

Despite a public rhetoric that supports the idea of expanding the military conflict in Ukraine beyond its borders (to nearby states or to the European/global level), 33.01% of respondents believe that this is largely and very largely feasible (Table 4; Q14).

Table 4. Perception of the crisis in Ukraine (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q11	The conflict in Ukraine produced the economic crisis	7.23	14.58	23.37	30.48	24.34
Q12	The economic crisis is due to the Russian Federation	5.42	12.89	25.30	29.04	27.35
Q13	Russia wants to reset the world order by invading Ukraine	7.71	10.48	30.60	29.76	21.45
Q14	War in Ukraine will spread to neighbouring countries	13.37	23.25	30.36	20.84	12.17
Q15	War in Ukraine will spread to European/global level	13.61	23.25	28.55	20.36	14.22

It is worth noting, in the context of the above and of the European institutions’ claim that social solidarity measures need to be adopted, that 37.95% of respondents are skeptical about the European Union’s solidarity in the event of a worsening of the economic situation in Romania, while 29.48% of respondents believe that the EU Member States will provide a great or very great deal of the necessary support (Table 5; Q16).

On the other hand, it is worth noting that 49.51% of respondents believe that Romania’s membership of the European Union is likely to contribute to a large and very large extent to limiting the negative effects on Romania as a result of the crisis in Ukraine (Table 5; Q17).

Table 5. Perception of European solidarity (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q16	European Union will help Romania economically	13.25	24.70	32.77	19.52	9.76
Q17	Romania’s EU membership will limit the negative effects of the war in Ukraine	5.18	12.89	32.41	28.67	20.84

Starting from the precedent of the COVID-19 pandemic, when for medical reasons authorities in many state entities adopted measures restricting/limiting some of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens, the present study highlights that in the context of

the deepening economic crisis at European/global level, 16.27% of respondents expressed their agreement to limit some fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens, such as the right to information, education, or culture, while 63.37% have the opposite opinion (Table 6; Q18).

In the same context, only 18.80% of respondents expressed a large and very large agreement on the limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, as a result of suspending the activities of some of the economic entities or moving part of them to the online environment (Table 6; Q19). Regarding the issue of accepting the lowering of the level of social protection, a percentage of 20.12% agrees largely and very largely with such measures (Table 6; Q20).

Table 6. Perceptions on accepting restrictions/limitations of rights and freedoms for economic reasons (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q18	Limit some fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens in the context of the economic crisis	47.95	15.42	20.36	10.00	6.27
Q19	Limit the right to work and economic freedom in the context of the economic crisis	41.81	20.12	19.28	11.81	6.99
Q20	Agreeing with the impact on the standard of living as a result of reducing social protection	35.06	20.24	24.58	11.93	8.19

In the context of the worsening military crisis in Ukraine, which could also have related consequences in Romania, 66.77% of the respondents expressed their disagreement with the willingness to accept the restriction/limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens, such as the right to information, education, culture, or health. In the same context, only a small percentage of 18.43% of the respondents expressed their agreement, to a large or very large extent, to the limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, as a result of the suspension of the activities of some economic entities or moving part of them online (Table 7; Q22).

Table 7. Perceptions of acceptance of restriction/limitation of rights and freedoms for military reasons (general approach).

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q21	Agreeing with the limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens (the right to information, education, culture, health, etc.)	52.05	14.72	17.83	9.16	6.27
Q22	Agreeing with the limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, as a result of the suspension of activities of many economic entities or the shifting of a part of them online	39.04	20.36	22.17	10.96	7.47
Q23	Limiting the right to free movement and freedom of assembly in the event of an extension of the military conflict in Ukraine	41.20	21.08	19.64	11.45	6.63
Q24	Agree with the decrease of social protection and living standards in case of an extension of the military conflict in Ukraine to Romania	35.06	22.89	23.73	9.64	8.67

On the other hand, the limitation of some fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in Romania, such as the free movement of persons or freedom of assembly, would be accepted to a large and very large extent by only 18.08% of respondents (Table 7; Q23). Acceptance of the impairment of the level of social protection that would provide citizens

with a decent standard of living is found to a large and very large extent among 18.31% of respondents (Table 7; Q24).

Regarding the level of expression of readiness to fulfil fundamental duties of citizens, as provided for in the Romanian Constitution, in the event of the adoption of exceptional measures at the national level as a result of the possible extension of the military conflict in Ukraine, the survey shows a reasonable percentage (37.83%) of respondents expressing agreement to a great and very great extent (Table 8; Q25). In the event of the adoption of such exceptional measures at the national level, only 33.37% of respondents would agree to a large or very large extent to contribute to the defense of the country through direct participation in theatres of operations (Table 8; Q26). Similar percentages are found in terms of willingness to participate in ensuring defense capabilities, such as working in sectors adjacent to the military (Table 8; Q27).

Table 8. Perceptions of the level of willingness to perform fundamental duties.

No.	Question Content	To a Very Small Extent %	Small Extent %	Neutral %	To a Large Extent %	To a Very Large Extent %
Q25	Agree to express allegiance to Romania if exceptional measures are taken as a result of the widening military conflict in Ukraine	15.18	14.46	32.53	20.84	16.99
Q26	Agree to contribute to the defence of the country through direct participation in theaters of operations in the event of exceptional measures being taken as a result of the widening military conflict in Ukraine	23.01	16.27	27.35	17.71	15.66
Q27	Agree to contribute to the defense of the country through direct participation in defense capabilities (sectors adjacent to the military) in the event of the adoption of exceptional measures as a result of the widening military conflict in Ukraine	22.89	14.34	22.43	17.11	17.23

By conducting the Chi-Square test on the responses to questions Q18–Q27 in relation to age, gender, residential area, and respondents' education level, the results presented in Table 9 were obtained.

Table 9. Chi-Square test values in relation to age, gender, residential area, and education level.

Q	Age			Gender			Home Environment			Studies		
	Value	Df	As. Sig.	Value	Df	As. Sig.	Value	Df	As. Sig.	Value	Df	As. Sig.
Q18	28.495	12	0.005	3.266	4	0.514	14.414	4	0.006	47.305	16	0.000
Q19	32.971	12	0.001	4.165	4	0.384	13.338	4	0.010	49.063	16	0.000
Q20	38.823	12	0.000	0.924	4	0.921	4.188	4	0.381	50.054	16	0.000
Q21	30.971	12	0.002	2.740	4	0.602	8.117	4	0.087	51.330	16	0.000
Q22	40.059	12	0.000	8.419	4	0.077	3.082	4	0.544	35.299	16	0.004
Q23	29.162	12	0.004	4.204	4	0.379	7.287	4	0.121	32.115	16	0.010
Q24	29.291	12	0.004	2.306	4	0.680	10.390	4	0.034	42.274	16	0.000
Q25	17.928	12	0.118	8.015	4	0.091	2.903	4	0.574	28.523	16	0.027
Q26	35.764	12	0.000	8.275	4	0.082	11.342	4	0.023	37.797	16	0.002
Q27	21.204	12	0.047	10.351	4	0.035	6.736	4	0.150	28.739	16	0.026

Regarding the age of the respondents, the results of the Chi-Square test show a significant association regarding the perception of respondents towards the acceptance/restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms due to economic and military considerations (Q18–Q24), as well as the level of willingness to fulfill constitutional duties (Q25–Q27).

In terms of gender, the results obtained from the test indicate that there is a significant value greater than the conventional level of 0.05 for questions Q18–Q26. This suggests that there is no significant association between the analyzed variables (male and female

gender) based on the available data. However, for question Q27, a significant association is observed between these variables.

Regarding the residential area of the respondents, the test results reveal a significant association for four questions (Q18, Q19, Q24, and Q26). For the other questions, the association is not significant.

Regarding the education level of the respondents, the interpretation of the results from Table 9 highlights that for all questions (Q18–Q27), there is a significant association. This certifies that the education level of the respondents is an important indicator reflecting their level of perception.

Tables 10–12 show correlations between different variables by applying the Pearson test. Thus, we were able to determine if there was any strong relationship between the selected variables.

Table 10. Pearson test results for the correlation between variable Q6 and Q18–Q20.

Correlations	Q6 (No Impact of Economic Crises/Impact of Economic Crises)	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Q18		
Not agree **	0.992	0.008
Agree **	0.999	0.001
Q19	0.995	0.005
Not agree **	0.995	0.005
Agree *	0.998	0.012
Q20	0.996	0.006
Not agree **	0.996	0.006
Agree **	0.999	0.001

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Disagree—people who gave a score of 1 or 2. Agree—people who gave a score of 4 or 5.

Table 11. Pearson test results for correlation between variable Q14 and Q21–Q24.

Correlations	Q14 (The War Will Not Expand/The War Will Expand)	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Q21		
Not agree **	0.992	0.008
Agree *	0.982	0.018
Q22		
Not agree **	0.992	0.008
Agree *	0.974	0.026
Q23		
Not agree *	0.987	0.013
Agree *	0.986	0.014
Q24		
Not agree *	0.988	0.012
Agree *	0.985	0.015

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Disagree—people who gave a score of 1 or 2. Agree—people who gave a score of 4 or 5.

Table 12. Pearson test results for correlation between variable Q14 and Q25–Q27.

Correlations	Q14 (The War Will Not Expand/The War Will Expand)	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Q25		
Not agree *	0.966	0.034
Agree *	0.977	0.023
Q26		
Not agree **	0.995	0.005
Agree **	0.990	0.010
Q27		
Not agree *	0.967	0.033
Agree *	0.968	0.032

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Disagree—people who gave a score of 1 or 2. Agree—people who gave a score of 4 or 5.

4. Discussion

The results of the measurements carried out by administering the questionnaire to a number of 826 respondents highlight their perception regarding the impact on the economic situation, social well-being, and citizen safety in Romania—seen as fundamental objectives of sustainable development—as a result of the global/European economic crisis (41.33%). The consequences of this crisis are seriously felt in the perception of the population surveyed (61.09%) (Table 2; Q5, Q6). It should be noted that Eurostat statistics showed, at the end of 2021 (a few months before the military invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine), that 34% of Romanians were living in poverty, isolated, or without the possibility to carry out gainful activities [34]. Comparing the data presented, it can be concluded that the evolution of the economic crisis and the situation in Ukraine has led to a heightened perception of worsening poverty among the Romanian population, an aspect that is in discord with the objective of sustainable development “Without poverty” which aims to “eradicate poverty in all its forms and in any context”. [3] In this context, the respondents’ confidence in the capacity of the state authorities to manage the current problematic situation in the Romanian society is decreasing (72.35%) (Table 2; Q7). This aspect may generate serious problems in terms of public acceptance of public policies aimed at ensuring good governance at national level, given that public trust in public institutions is the basis of their legitimacy, and is a major contribution to ensuring social cohesion [35], aspect in discord with the sustainable development objective “Peace, justice, and effective institutions”, which aims at “creating effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels” [3]. The fact that 53.26% of respondents believe that the major economic problems currently facing Romania are likely to affect its national security and sustainable development to a large and very large extent (Table 3; Q8) shows the high level of social responsibility of the surveyed population, despite its young age (18–35 years) and the importance of the economic dimension in the national security architecture [36]. The conclusion is in line with recent findings from specialized studies, which highlight that institutional indicators of sustainable development are linked to the economic sphere, with close relationships between “the institutional environment, the presence of threats to sustainable development, and the state of the country’s economic security” [37].

Regarding the causality of the emergence of the global/European economic crisis, noteworthy is the high percentage of respondents (41.21%) who believe that it is the result of a globally orchestrated conspiracy to reset the international order and reconfigure the poles of power (Table 3; Q9). Such a perception may lead to an incorrect interpretation of the effects of the phenomenon of globalization, considered to be the “architect” of today’s society, with studies supporting the idea that globalization, through its effects,

is an important factor in shaping the international security equation, and its impact on the evolution of relations between states is contradictory [38]. In this context, the study shows a high percentage (63.35%) of respondents who think that the media does not correctly present the consequences of the economic crisis affecting Romania (Table 3; Q10), although it is a reference in understanding problematic aspects of society and in forming public opinion.

On the other hand, 54.82% of respondents consider the conflict in Ukraine, caused by the “special military operation” undertaken by the Russian Federation, as the source of the economic crisis (Table 4; Q11), action that fundamentally affects the provisions of the sustainable development objective “Peace, justice, and effective institutions” found in the ASD, which aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development” [3]. It can be argued that the respondents’ opinions have crystallized against the backdrop of media campaigns undertaken both nationally and internationally, which highlight the economic sanctions imposed by the international community on the Russian Federation [39], and the direct/indirect negative effects on the economies of many European countries that are dependent on its energy resources [40], which can affect the sustainability of society at a regional level.

It is worth noting that 56.39% of the respondents believe that the Russian Federation’s operation was largely or very largely aimed at generating a global economic crisis (Table 4; Q12), but only 51.21% of the respondents believe that the invasion of Ukraine is a premeditated action aimed at resetting the world order (Table 4; Q13). This theory is intensively used in international political and diplomatic circles [41,42]. Regarding the possibility of the military conflict in Ukraine spreading to nearby states or to the European/global level (an idea accredited by some authorities of the Russian Federation in the context of the military support given to Ukraine by some Western countries), the study shows that 34.58% of respondents believe that this is feasible to a large and very large extent (Table 4; Q15). In the context of the amplification of the adverse consequences of the global/European economic crisis, felt also by Romania [43], and the clamor of the leadership of the European institutions for the need to adopt social solidarity measures [44], 29.4% of respondents believe that this will be achieved to a large and very large extent (Table 5; Q16).

At the same time, 49.51% of respondents believe that Romania’s membership in the European Union is likely to contribute substantially to limiting the negative effects of the crisis in Ukraine (Table 5; Q16), figures confirmed by the INSCOP survey conducted in early 2022, which reveals that 54.9% of Romanians believe that Romania’s accession to the European Union has rather brought advantages to our country [45]. In this context, the idea can be supported that, in the respondents’ opinion, a military conflict, such as the one in the Ukrainian space, is likely to lead to solidarity among the states of the European Union [46], which can be seen in line with the objective of “Partnerships for achieving goals”—aiming to “strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development” as provided in the Sustainable Development Agenda [3].

The restriction/limitation of some fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens (right to information, education, culture, or health)—which are also found as objectives of the ASD (“Health and well-being”, “Quality education”)—as possible measures to manage the forms of economic crisis that are manifested at European/global level, is accepted to a large and very large extent by 16.27% of respondents (Table 6; Q18). These options of the respondents are manifested in the context that the analyzed category of rights and freedoms of the individual are guaranteed by international law and provide them with a set of “social opportunities” that allow them to participate in social life [47]. Limiting the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, in the hypothetical situation of suspending the activities of economic entities or moving a significant part of them to the online environment would be accepted to a large and very large extent by only 18.80% of the respondents (Table 6; Q19), since this conduct can be seen in correlation with the objective

“Decent work and economic growth”, found in the ASD [3]. The conclusions drawn are in line with recent research studies in the field, which highlight the necessity of employment and the promotion of decent work as an imperative for sustainable development [48].

It should be noted that the discussed issue, in a general sense, was regulated at the European level in May 2021 through the Action Plan for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with an emphasis on equal opportunities and access to the labor market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion as an imperative for sustainable development [49]. On the other hand, the acceptance of reducing the level of social protection, which ensures citizens a decent standard of living, is found among 20.10% of respondents (Table 6; Q19).

An analysis of the previously presented data highlights that there are no significant differences between the choices of the respondents in relation to gender (Table 9). Neither analyzed variable (male and female) shows differentiations in terms of their perception. Regarding the age of the respondents, the results of the applied Chi-Square test show a significant association concerning the perception of the respondents regarding the acceptance/restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms due to economic and military considerations (Q18–Q24), as well as the level of expression of their willingness to fulfill constitutional duties (Q25–Q27). In relation to the residential area of the respondents, the test results reveal a significant association for four questions (Q18, Q19, Q24, and Q26), as defined in Tables 6–8.

In order to determine the degree of correlation between the acceptance of limiting fundamental rights and the effects on social sustainability, we conducted the Pearson correlation test between the variable “degree of experiencing the consequences of the economic crisis” (Q6) and the variables “limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens, such as the right to information (e.g., restrictions on social networks, mass media, etc.), education (transition to online learning), culture (closure of cultural institutions), health” (Q18), “limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, as a result of the suspension of activities of some economic entities or their partial move to the online environment” (Q19), and “impact on the standard of living due to the reduction of social protection that ensures a decent standard of living for all citizens” (Q20). Observing the results in the Table 10, we understand that people who feel the effects of major economic problems in Romania and are aware of its effects on sustainable development have a high degree of acceptability regarding the diminution/limitation of some fundamental rights, the correlations being very strong.

The restriction/limitation of some fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in Romania (right to information, education, culture, or health)—found, as mentioned before, among the objectives of the ASD—as possible extreme measures in the situation of the exacerbation of the military crisis in Ukraine, would be accepted to a large and very large extent by 15.43% of respondents (Table 7; Q21). The results highlight the importance of preserving the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, including in the context of problematic situations caused by military conflicts. In the same context, only 18.33% of respondents agreed to a large or very large extent with the limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom in the case of temporary suspension or full or partial transfer of economic activities online (Table 7; Q22). Limiting certain rights and freedoms, such as the free movement of persons or freedom of assembly, would be accepted to a large and very large extent by 18.07% of respondents (Table 7; Q23). Acceptance of the impairment of the level of social protection that would provide citizens with a decent standard of living is found in the same parameters of interpretation by 18.31% of respondents (Table 7; Q24).

Qualitative analysis of the data presented above shows that female respondents are less willing to accept restrictions/limitations of rights and freedoms due to military conflicts. Willingness is also lower among urban respondents compared to rural respondents. A higher degree of readiness (up to 5%) is found among respondents with university education and those in the 21–35 age sample. It is worth mentioning that the study results

are in line with recent research in the field, which highlight that the availability of exercising citizens' rights and duties should be closely correlated with the indicators of citizens' quality of life, seen as an imperative for achieving sustainable development at the national level [50,51].

It should be noted that the restriction/limitation of certain fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens in the event of a military crisis is carried out through administrative and judicial measures adopted by the state authorities, in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 (derogation in case of emergency) of the European Convention on Human Rights, which grants the possibility, in exceptional circumstances, of "temporary, limited and controlled derogation from the obligation to ensure certain rights and freedoms under the Convention" [52].

Regarding the degree of trust in "the extension of the military crisis in Ukraine to the states in the vicinity of the Russian Federation (including Romania)" (Q14), correlated with "the limitation of some fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in Romania, such as the right to information, education, culture, health, etc." (Q21), "the limitation of the right to work and social protection or economic freedom, as a result of the suspension of the activities of many economic entities or the relocation of part of them to the online environment" (Q22), "limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms of Romanian citizens such as the free movement of persons or freedom of assembly" (Q23), and "impairment of the standard of living as a result of the reduction in the level of social protection, such as to ensure a decent standard of living for all citizens" (Q24), we note that the results show strong correlations, according to Table 11.

The Pearson test reveals strong correlations both for people who believe that the war in Ukraine will spread to other countries, including Romania, and their high degree of acceptance of the curtailment of fundamental rights, and for people who do not have a high degree of confidence in the spread of the war and their low degree of acceptance of the curtailment of fundamental rights.

Willingness to fulfill certain fundamental duties of Romanian citizens, as provided for in the Romanian Constitution—approached from the perspective of the objective "Peace, justice and effective institutions" of the ASD [3]—in the hypothetical situation of adoption at national level of exceptional measures in the event of an extension of the military conflict in Ukraine, is manifested to a large and very large extent in 37.83% of respondents (Table 8; Q25). Likewise, only 33.37% of the respondents would agree, to a great and very great extent, to contribute to the defense of the country through direct participation in theatres of operations (Table 8; Q26).

Willingness to participate in providing defense capabilities in sectors adjacent to the military domain—which can be seen as circumscribed by the "Industry, innovation, and infrastructure" objective of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development [3]—is manifested to a large and very large extent by 32.34% of respondents (Table 8; Q27).

Qualitative analysis of the data presented above shows that the share of male respondents is higher in expressing the results of the options regarding the willingness to perform basic duties (by 2–6%), as well as respondents from rural areas (by 2–6%), those with higher education (by 4–7%), and those in the age sample 21–35 years (by 5–7%). The analyzed issue revolves around the civic engagement of citizens in community life, as a goal for achieving sustainable development of society, as also highlighted in recent studies [53].

The degree of trust in "the spread of the military crisis in Ukraine to states in the vicinity of the Russian Federation (including Romania)" (Q14), correlated with "express loyalty to the country, as a fundamental duty expressed in the Romanian Constitution (e.g., the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova)" (Q14): fulfilment of citizenship obligations" (Q25), "contribute to the defense of the country through direct participation in theatres of operations" (Q26) and "contribute to the defense of the country through direct participation in ensuring defense capabilities (carrying out work in sectors adjacent to the military domain)" (Q27), reveal very strong correlations, according to Table 12. The Pearson correlation test applied between the variables mentioned above reveals a very high degree

of correlation both in the case of people who believe in the expansion of the conflict in Ukraine and their acceptance of having some of their rights guaranteed by the Constitution diminished, and in the case of people who believe that the war in Ukraine will not go beyond its borders and the low degree of acceptance of the limitation/diminution of some fundamental rights.

5. Research Limitations

In the context that this study is among the first in Romania to address such a topic, it is inevitably characterized by some research limitations.

Considering that the current research strictly focuses on drawing conclusions of interest through statistical analysis of data obtained from the online questionnaire administered to 826 adult individuals from Romania, a significant limitation is the qualitative nature of the study, as it is not representative of the entire population of Romania.

A second limitation is represented by the data collection method (online environment) since only individuals with Internet access [54] had the opportunity to access and complete the mentioned questionnaire. Additionally, there is a possibility of subjective self-selection of respondents [55] and the redistribution of the questionnaire among groups of individuals with similar views on the researched subject [54]. It should be noted, firstly, that respondents' access to the Internet varies depending on their social class, and secondly, the likelihood of respondents accepting to participate in the questionnaire may depend on some of the socioeconomic factors that the questionnaire itself evaluates.

A third limitation of the research is the inability to clearly delineate the influences of the economic crisis and the military crisis in Ukraine on the research objectives (assessing the degree of acceptability of restricting/limiting fundamental rights and freedoms and the availability of fulfilling certain civic duties). The temporal overlap and interdependence of the mentioned crises can influence how citizens perceive their effects.

A fourth limitation is determined by the fact that the questionnaire did not include indicators related to the respondents' socioeconomic status (SES), which could provide insights into their knowledge and capacity to respond accurately to the questions. Given the complexity of the study, which addresses various security issues, this limitation affects the assessment of respondents' perspectives.

6. Conclusions

The new global/European economic crisis, which started in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, has produced negative consequences, which have been felt in Romania as well in terms of sustainable development. These were amplified by the security crisis caused by the "special military operation" launched by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. This study shows that, in this new security context, young Romanian citizens (18–35 years old) are very concerned about the preservation of their fundamental rights and freedoms, as stipulated in the Romanian Constitution (right to information, education or culture, right to health, work and social protection or economic freedom, free movement of persons or freedom of assembly), showing a low degree of acceptance of their restriction/limitation, even in exceptional situations. These behaviors of the younger population are natural in today's society [56], as a result of educating young people in the spirit of freedom, understanding, and pragmatism in interpreting events in an objective manner. It involves the development of critical thinking and the abandonment of certain prejudices that could lead to customary approaches to the diverse and complex issues faced by society today. However, these behaviors may impact the national sustainable development goals (in line with those outlined in the ASD), as the relationship between human rights and sustainable development objectives is extensively debated in specialized circles [57,58].

The willingness to fulfill fundamental constitutional duties of citizens (loyalty to the country, defense of the country, etc.) in the event of exceptional measures due to the escalation of the military conflict in Ukraine is a major concern for only about one-third of the respondents. Higher values are found among male respondents, those from rural

areas, those with higher education, and those in the age group of 21–35 years. Based on the presented findings, we believe that it is necessary to develop a sense of national and patriotic spirit, foster devotion, and promote a culture of security to create a sustainable future [59,60]. It is important to educate the youth in the spirit of sustainable societal development [61], both within the educational process and through the influence of opinion leaders, the media, or institutions in the fields of defense, public order, and national security.

The study confirms the research hypothesis, namely that current security issues (the economic crisis at the European/global level and the military crisis in Ukraine) negatively influence the level of acceptability of restricting/limiting fundamental rights and freedoms and the availability of fulfilling certain fundamental duties (differentiated based on educational level and place of residence), which can have significant implications for societal sustainability. The mentioned differentiations can be explained if we accept, on one hand, that the level of perception, awareness, and involvement in managing problematic issues at the current societal level is directly proportional to the citizens' level of education, and on the other hand, that the population residing in rural areas has a unique connection to their place of origin.

Considering the results of this study, we believe that it could contribute to the discussions related to the development of necessary public policies for the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan [62], specifically the “Good Governance” section, which is linked to public sector reforms, increasing judicial efficiency, and strengthening the capacity of social partners.

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