The 34th Economic Forum in Karpacz

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The 34th Economic Forum in Karpacz once again brought together over 6,000 high-level participants from politics, business, academia, and civil society, reaffirming its role as the largest geopolitical conference in Central and Eastern Europe. While the Forum includes numerous panels on defence and security, it is far from being solely a defence-focused event. Many participants come from corporations, social activism, local governments, and other non-political sectors, which creates a unique opportunity to step out of a strictly military perspective. I found it particularly valuable to visit the Civil Defense Zone and hear firsthand what everyday citizens,

civil society leaders, and professionals outside politics think about security. These conversations often produced fresh, unexpected insights that complemented traditional military and policy analyses. I was honoured to represent EPIS Think tank as a member of the Security Policy & Defence Working Group, giving me the chance to connect with a broad spectrum of actors from politics, business, civil society, and academia.

The Role of the Young Generation in Security

One of the highlights of my participation was speaking on the panel "Will the Young Generation Defend Us?" where we explored the importance of engaging young people in national defence and public security. The discussion involved a diverse audience, including think tank members, local town mayors, military officers, law enforcement personnel, corporate leaders, young activists, and university students. I emphasized that sustainable security depends not only on advanced technologies and defence spending but, above all, on people. Panel participants collectively agreed that encouraging the younger generation to pursue careers in the armed forces, police, and other uniformed services requires competitive salaries, prestige, patriotic education, and improved service conditions. Strengthening the public image of these professions is just as critical to ensuring the resilience of national security institutions, and the variety of perspectives in the room—spanning government, civil society, and business—provided valuable insights into how to make these professions more attractive and relevant to today's youth.

Geopolitics, Civil Defence, and Transatlantic Dialogue

Beyond the panel, I took part in numerous conversations in the Civil Defense Zone on urgent issues such as the war in Ukraine, NATO's adaptation to hybrid threats, and energy security. Another highlight was reconnecting with Professor Patrick Mendis and his wife, Antonina Łuszczykiewicz-Mendis, PhD (陸安寧), during lunch, where we continued our dialogue on Polish-American relations and global security dynamics. These exchanges underscored the importance of transatlantic cooperation in facing current geopolitical challenges and building a secure future for Europe and beyond.

Observations on Public Sentiment and Preparedness

A striking impression from the Forum was the widespread concern among Poles regarding the prolonged war in Ukraine and the potential for Russian aggression against NATO territories. Many conversations took place not only with senior defence officials but also with university students, young officers, and emerging leaders in the security sector. While there is some will among civilians to contribute to national defence and resilience, this willingness is often undermined by fear and uncertainty. Unfortunately, there is a lack of solid strategy, coordinated planning, and effective com-

munication between the government and ordinary citizens. The consensus was sobering: while Poland is investing in security and training, we remain, unfortunately, ill-prepared to respond effectively in the event of a sudden escalation. These discussions highlighted both the value of engaging young people and civil society in security issues and the urgent need to improve coordination and public awareness.

People Behind the Forum's Success

Overall, the 34th Economic Forum in Karpacz reinforced the value of bringing together participants from diverse sectors, generations, and professional backgrounds. The combination of defence experts, government officials, corporate leaders, civil society representatives, and young activists created a space for rich, multifaceted discussions that go beyond traditional military perspectives. The Forum demonstrated that sustainable security depends not only on technology, budgets, and formal institutions, but also on engaged, informed, and empowered people. Observing the concerns, hopes, and insights of participants—particularly young people and civilians—underscored the importance of civic engagement, public awareness, and cross-sector collaboration in building resilience.

Of course, the Forum's success is thanks to the tireless efforts of many individuals. I would like to especially acknowledge Zofia Czerwińska & Jakub Dołęga (Young@Forum Program Coordinators), Marta Ekner (SGH Warsaw School of Economics), Wojciech Zieliński (Venator Foundation), and Barbara Wywiał & Bartosz Mościcki (Forum of Young Diplomats) for their dedication and leadership. Thanks to their work, young voices had the chance to engage in meaningful debates and actively shape Europe's security discourse.

For me, the event was a powerful reminder that fostering dialogue across sectors and preparing the next generation of security professionals are just as critical to regional and national security as conventional defence measures. I look forward to contributing again in the future!