XXIII Forte International Security Conference 2026
Executive Summary

The international system is undergoing a structural transformation defined by geopolitical fragmentation, technological disruption, and intensifying great-power competition. The institutions and assumptions that shaped the post-Cold War order are under increasing strain. Sovereignty itself is being redefined: beyond territory and population, it now encompasses technological capabilities, digital infrastructure, energy systems, and informational resilience.

Strategic autonomy emerges not as autarky but as the capacity to reduce vulnerabilities, diversify partnerships, and develop national capabilities while remaining integrated into the global economy. Resilience, understood as the ability to anticipate and recover from shocks, is replacing efficiency as the organizing principle of security and development strategies.

Five overarching conclusions

- Technology has become one of the primary drivers of geopolitical competition.
- Sovereignty in the twenty-first century extends to digital, technological, energy, and informational dimensions.
- Strategic autonomy does not imply isolation, but the diversification of partnerships and capabilities.
- Resilience is replacing efficiency as the organizing principle of national strategies.
- Europe and Latin America share convergent interests and complementary assets that could support a stronger strategic partnership.

Panel I – Global Governance in an Age of Disruption: Multilateralism, Innovation and Strategic Autonomy

The post-Cold War multilateral architecture persists formally, but its capacity to generate consensus and effective collective responses has diminished. The international system is not moving from one stable order to another; it is entering a prolonged period of fragmentation. Neither the United States nor China appears interested in constructing a new rules-based architecture; both are primarily focused on maximizing relative gains in an increasingly transactional environment.

Networked multilateralism: More flexible forms of governance are emerging in response to the crisis of universal institutions. Regional organizations, issue-specific coalitions, and networks of middle powers complement traditional arrangements. ASEAN and the African Union were cited as illustrations of this trend.

Active non-alignment: Countries such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and several European nations share the objective of preserving strategic autonomy amid US-China polarization. This does not imply neutrality, but a strategy of diversification and flexibility, avoiding excessive dependence on any single technological ecosystem.

Panel II – Artificial Intelligence and Democracy: Between Innovation and Institutional Erosion

AI simultaneously represents an unprecedented opportunity and a profound source of vulnerability. Deepfakes, algorithmic amplification, and automated disinformation campaigns erode trust in institutions and the information ecosystem, which is the very foundation on which democratic systems rest.

Crisis of truth: The rise of generative AI makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish authentic content from fabricated material. Democracy depends on shared facts; when citizens can no longer agree on what is real, the foundations of democratic deliberation become fragile.

Concentration of power and 'technofeudalism': A small number of companies control critical digital infrastructures, cloud services, and the most advanced AI models. This concentration creates unprecedented asymmetries between states and private actors, with direct implications for sovereignty and democratic accountability.

Regulation: Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Brazil's General Data Protection Law (LGPD) were highlighted as relevant contributions to global digital governance debates. No country has yet found the optimal model. A combination of regulatory sandboxes, ethical certification mechanisms, and stronger public-private cooperation was identified as the most promising path forward.

Panel III – Defense and Innovation: Europe and Latin America Facing a Wake-Up Call

Technology is no longer simply a supporting factor for military capabilities; it has become a core dimension of power itself. Defense can no longer be understood as an exclusively military matter: it increasingly encompasses industrial policy and public-private cooperation.

Digital sovereignty: Where data is stored and processed has become a matter of national security. Dependence on foreign infrastructure creates vulnerabilities that states can no longer ignore. Building domestic data infrastructure was presented as a component of broader technological sovereignty strategies.

The Gripen partnership as a model: The Brazil-Sweden program was highlighted as a successful example of strategic cooperation based on technology transfer and industrial development, going beyond traditional equipment acquisition. It represents a possible model for future Europe-Latin America partnerships.

Latin America's position: The region faces fewer conventional military threats but remains vulnerable to technological dependency and the risk of becoming solely a supplier of raw materials. Panelists underscored that passivity is not an option, but the alternative requires active industrial policy and strategic partnerships built on mutual benefit.

Panel IV – Strategic Minerals and Sovereignty: The New Geopolitics of Rare Earths

Lithium, copper, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth elements have become indispensable inputs for electric vehicles, semiconductors, batteries, data centers, and defense technologies. Competition over these resources represents the return of geopolitics to the domain of natural resources, with more complex and diversified value chains than in the oil era.

Chinese dominance: China's position stems not merely from geological advantages but from decades of industrial policy, long-term investment, and strategic planning. This concentration transforms critical minerals into an instrument of geopolitical leverage. Diversification, rather than decoupling, was presented by the discussants as the most realistic response.

Opportunity for Brazil and Latin America: The region possesses abundant reserves, but the central challenge is capturing greater value across production chains, through processing, refining, manufacturing, and technological development, avoiding the historical pattern of raw material exports.

Political cycles vs. strategic time horizons: Developing mining, refining, and manufacturing ecosystems requires decades of sustained investment. The ability to maintain continuity across administrations was identified in the discussion as a prerequisite for success, demanding state policies, not merely government policies.

Panel V – New Technologies and the Future of Warfare

Emerging technologies are redefining the character of conflict itself. The boundaries between war and peace, military and civilian domains, and physical and virtual spaces are becoming increasingly blurred.

Ukraine as a laboratory: The conflict demonstrated how relatively inexpensive drone systems can impose significant costs on conventional military platforms. Technological innovation is occurring during wars, not between them, which makes adaptability and learning capacity as strategically valuable as equipment.

AI and autonomous systems: AI affects intelligence, logistics, surveillance, cyber operations, and autonomous systems. The defining question is not technical but political and ethical: how much decision-making authority should be delegated to machines? Historical precedents suggest major powers are unlikely to voluntarily accept restrictions on their military options.

Cognitive warfare: Modern conflicts increasingly target perceptions, narratives, and social cohesion rather than territory alone. Informational resilience has become a critical element of national defense, blurring the distinction between internal and external security.

Conclusion

The transformation underway is not merely technological — it is geopolitical, economic, and institutional. The central challenge of our time is not technological but political: the ability of states and societies to adapt their institutions and governance mechanisms to a world shaped by technological acceleration and geopolitical fragmentation will largely determine their future capacity to preserve stability and strategic relevance.

The question facing nations is no longer whether power is being rewired. It is whether societies will be capable of rewiring themselves quickly enough to shape the new order rather than merely adapt to it.