



# Security & Defence Agenda Report

## A conversation with **Elmar Mammadyarov** **Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan**

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**SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA**

Bibliothèque Solvay, Parc Léopold,

137 rue Belliard, B-1040, Brussels, Belgium

T: +32 (0)2 737 91 48 F: +32 (0)2 736 32 16

E: [info@securitydefenceagenda.org](mailto:info@securitydefenceagenda.org) W: [www.securitydefenceagenda.org](http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org)

## A conversation with Elmar Mammadyarov

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## A conversation with Elmar Mammadyarov

### Speaker

**H.E. Dr. Elmar Mammadyarov**  
*Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan*

Elmar Mammadyarov has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan since 2004. Mammadyarov was previously Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Italy and between 1998-2003 served as Counsellor at the embassy of Azerbaijan to the USA.

Mammadyarov began his career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1991 as Director of Division for State Protocol before serving as First Secretary in the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the UN in New York. In 1995 he returned as Deputy Director of the Department of International Organisations.

Prior to his time in the MFA, Mammadyarov was an exchange scholar at Brown University in the Center for Foreign Policy Development. He holds a PHD in History from the Diplomatic Academy of the MFA of the USSR and a degree from Kiev State University, School of International Relations and International Law.



### Moderator



**Giji Gya**

*Head of Office of the Deputy Director  
Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)*

Giji Gya has been Head of the Office of the Deputy Director for DCAF since 2011. Gya also coordinates the Brussels office as Dr. Philipp Fluri's deputy.

She was previously Executive Director of ISIS Europe from 2007-2011, during which she created the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Mission Analysis Partnership, and was the editor of the European Security Review. Prior to moving to Europe, she worked for International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) in Australia and consulted for the UN including the UN Mine Action Service in 2004 and UN Development Fund for Women in 2009. She was also Assistant Director of the Global Policy Forum in New York in 2000-2001.

Gya holds a Masters in International Development from RMIT University in Australia, and a degree in Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne.



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### Introduction

Speaking to a packed Brussels audience, **H.E. Dr. Elmar Mammadyarov**, Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, outlined the challenges and opportunities facing his country on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence.

Chaired by **Giji Gya**, Head of Office of the Deputy Director for the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the debate ranged from internal matters of economic growth, energy and the fight against corruption to international engagement in Afghanistan and tensions with Iran. When it came to the issue of Armenian occupation of the Azerbaijani territories, the Minister expressed a firm opinion that diplomacy remains Azerbaijan's first and best option for addressing this long-term problem.

### Home affairs after 20 years of independence

The Minister, noting healthy economic growth in Azerbaijan over the past decade, was optimistic about the continued prosperity of the young Azeri nation. "In 20 years of independence, my country has done a good job, not to only of becoming self sufficient, but of strengthening its institutions and human capital", he declared.

Energy issues have become a strong component of Baku's economic strategy in this regard, with Azerbaijan's strategic position at the fulcrum of Central Asian fields and European markets making pipeline investment a state priority. "This helps us a lot to build the economy, to make reforms, and invest more of the money coming from oil businesses into infrastructure projects - a priority for the government."

Indeed, the Minister maintained that Azerbaijan would not make the mistake of becoming a "single pillar" state, overly focused on energy revenue, rather than the education of its workforce and diversification of its economic activities.

Questions came from the floor on Baku's progress in dealing with allegations of state corruption, asking if this was a major issue within the bureaucracy if it could cause foreign investment to stagnate.

The Minister admitted that corruption is "an everyday fight", and a difficult internal challenge. Nonetheless, he noted that "we have a special commission for this, and I do not think that it is hampering investments". Affirming steady progress in this area, the Minister explained: "I don't want to paint it as all good, there are problems. But realistically, the most important aspect is that we recognise it is an issue, an issue that needs to be seriously addressed."

### Foreign policy

Turning to external relations, the Minister focused on Azerbaijani involvement in Afghanistan, where 154 Azeri soldiers participate in NATO ISAF operations. Yet military forces alone cannot settle this difficult security issue. "What we must understand is that there is no single policy solution in Afghanistan", he explained. Instead, Azerbaijan is engaged in a host of programmes in the war-torn country, from building up civil society to inviting Afghan officials to a diplomatic academy course. Azerbaijan has also become a key economic partner in the region.

Perhaps most importantly, noting Azeri participation in the recent international conference on Afghanistan in

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Bonn, the Minister avowed “a strong conviction” that the international community must continue to support the war-torn country beyond NATO’s 2014 pull-out. “I am absolutely sure the international community, NATO, ISAF and all partners, should and must not leave Afghanistan alone”, he said.

“We need to double or even triple our efforts to educate people that this is not the way a normal country can proceed”... “That you cannot occupy the territory of another state, and that no-one is allowed to change the borders of a country through the process of ethnic cleansing.”

Claiming such a choice “could bring a humanitarian catastrophe” to the region, and “create a serious mess”, Baku stands fully behind ongoing UN and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) diplomacy. “I think negotiations should go on, and that engagement is one of the elements I believe can be extremely important

The discussion then moved on to regional tensions with Iran. **Pascal Meunier**, Senior Vice President of International Development for Thales asked, “What will your contribution be to finding a solution with Iran”, especially its increasing global isolation by the EU and US over alleged nuclear weapons programmes?

To begin, the Minister explained that “strong connections with Iran” - where up to 30% of the country shares linguistic and cultural links with Azerbaijan - “provide us with access and bilateral agreements with which we try to build up more predictable and constructive relations with Iran.” This allows “personal connections” which perhaps elude European Ministers, the Minister indicated.

Yet despite this, the Minister agreed that relations with Iran were not always easy. “Sometimes, there are different ideas and forces which cause quarrelling between us”, he explained, “over how to deal with religious issues, or agreements on the use of the Caspian Sea”, for example. Yet over all, “we believe we can handle the situation” in a constructive manner.

However, regarding the growing tension over Iran’s alleged nuclear ambitions, the Minister was firmly against the options currently being discussed in Western capitals. “Seriously speaking, we are clear on one thing – we are not in favour of a military solution.”

for a solution.”

### The road to peace in the South Caucasus?

Finally, a topic of some discussion was Baku’s “frozen” conflict with neighbouring Armenia, the result of protracted armed conflict in the early 1990s that today sees large swathes of territory under occupation.

The Minister quoted a host of UN and international treaties and resolutions calling for Armenia to cede control of the occupied regions. Indeed, **MEP Kirilov Evgeni Zahariev** intervened to affirm the European Parliament had voted “conclusively” that Azerbaijan had the right to make these demands. The Minister was thus clear that only a full Armenian troop withdrawal from these territories could end this conflict, in his view.

“We need to double or even triple our efforts to educate people that this is not the way a normal country can proceed”, he remonstrated. “That you cannot occupy the territory of another state, and that no-one is allowed to change the borders of a country through the process of ethnic cleansing.”

However, the Minister was also clear that Azerbaijan neither desires nor prioritises a resumption of armed conflict to resolve this issue. “One single life of a soldier

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is too high a price compared to what we can do by peaceful means”, he avowed. Instead, he “hope[s] we can move and use diplomacy to reach this goal, as it is clear that there are enormous opportunities for the restoration of communities, and economic prosperity”.

To this end, the Minister laid out some recent confidence-building and “people to people” initiatives set up for Armenian and displaced Azeri civilians ..

Yet ultimately the Minister felt that the “ball is in the Armenian court” on this issue. To relieve this tension, “decisions must be made by them”, he concluded. “We are simply trying to make proposals.”



## List of participants

**Sarin Abado**

*National Expert*  
E-Control

**Gunduz Abdulov**

*Staff Officer*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Marat Aitbayev**

*Voluntary National Contributor*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Roni Alasor**

*Editor*  
Ararat News Publishing

**Monuel Armal**

The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS)

**Azad Aslanov**

*Third Secretary*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Azamat Ayap**

*Counsellor*  
Embassy of Kazakhstan to Belgium

**Eda Aygen**

*Project Assistant*  
Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Agshin Babayev**

*Liaison Officer, Azerbaijan*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

**Aynur Baghirova**

*Student*  
College of Europe

**Gintautas Baranauskas**

*Administrator*  
Council of the European Union

**Florian Bauernfeind**

*Project Assistant*  
Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Danila Bochkarev**

*Senior Fellow, Energy and Global Security*  
EastWest Institute

**Olivier Bulto**

*Analyst*  
K City

**Josef Buzalka**

*Political Advisor to the EUSR for the South Caucasus*  
European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Fraser Cameron**

*Director*  
EU-Russia Centre

**Geert Cami**

*Co-Founder & Director*  
Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Mariette Colinet**

*Retired EC Official*

**Philippe Cuylaerts**

*Public Affairs Manager*  
The European Azerbaijan Society (TEAS)

**Pierre Day**

*Political Analyst*  
Ministry of Defence, France

**Joan Delaney**

*Independent Consultant*

**Polydoros Demetriades**

*Principal Administrator*  
European Commission

**Pierre Dybman**

*Political Officer*  
European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Maria Elena Efthymiou**

*Administrator*  
European Parliament



## List of participants

---

**Steffen Elgersma**

*Political Affairs and Security Policy*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Emin Eyyubov**

*Ambassador*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to the EU

**Gert Fässler**

*External Relations staff*  
Mission of Switzerland to the EU

**Alan Friedman**

*Independent Consultant*

**Torbjørn Frøysnes**

*Director*  
Council of Europe

**Didier Gambier**

*Head of Unit, Marie Curie Actions*  
European Commission

**Igor Garcia-Tapia**

*Project Manager*  
Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Joseph Geerts**

*President*  
Ocaz - Office de Communication de l'Azerbaïdjan

**Andrea Ghianda**

*Project Manager*  
Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Mohammad Munir Ghiasy**

*First Secretary*  
Embassy of Afghanistan to Belgium

**Ekaterina Gorbatova**

*Counsellor*  
Embassy of the Russian Federation to Belgium

**Stef Goris**

*Honorary Senator*  
Senate, Belgium

**Clara Grosset**

*Policy Assistant*  
Open Society Institute (OSI) - Brussels

**Col. Aghareadi Guliyev**

*Deputy Military Representative*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Bakhtiyar Gulyamov**

*Ambassador*  
Mission of Uzbekistan to NATO

**Vugar Gurbanov**

*Second Secretary*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Giji Gya**

*Head of Office of the Deputy Director*  
Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

**Rashad Hasanov**

*Consular Officer*  
Embassy of Azerbaijan to Belgium

**Lilian Hendriks**

*Senior Secretary*  
Gender Concerns International

**Balazs Honti**

*Independent Consultant*

**Huseyn Huseynov**

*First Secretary*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Mugabil Huseynov**

*Senior Liaison Officer, Azerbaijan*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

**Ondrej Hvorecky**

*Defence Attaché*  
Embassy of the Czech Republic to Belgium

**Zhaia Ibrahimova**

*Third Secretary*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Samir Ismayilov**

*First Secretary*  
Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Valentina Izmirova**

*Manager*  
Active Public Affairs

**Simon Jackson**

*Consultant, Senior Analyst Programmer*  
European Commission

**Emmanuel Jacob***President*

European Organisation of Military Associations  
(EUROMIL)

**Gauthier Jacob***EU advocacy and research assistant*

International Crisis Group (ICG)

**Bessarion Jghenti***First Counsellor*

Mission of Georgia to NATO

**Constantine Kapanadze***First Secretary*

Mission of Georgia to the EU

**Ulrich Karock***Policy Advisor*

European Parliament

**Daniel Keenan***Researcher*

Mission of the United States of America to the EU

**Adrian Kendry***Senior Defence Economist*

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Ibrahim Khazar***Ambassador, Head of Mission*

Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Kasia Kolanko***Project Associate*

APCO Worldwide Brussels Office

**Karel Kovanda***Governor, EU representative*

Asia-Europe Foundation

**Kamen Kumanov***Expert*

Active Public Affairs

**Bedo Kurkjian***Assistant editor*

Azat Or Daily Newspaper

**Oleksii Kuropiatnyk***Counsellor*

Mission of Ukraine to the EU

**Hannah Ledger***Project Assistant*

Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Charlotte Lerat***EU Policy Officer*

CCI ALPMED

**Marie T. Lubs***Member*

EGMONT, Royal Institute for International Relations

**Maj.Gen. Huseyn Mahmudov***Military Representative*

Mission of Azerbaijan to NATO

**Khalid Mammadov***Deputy Director*

Ocaz - Office de Communication de l'Azerbaïdjan

**Mukhtar Mammadov***Second Secretary*

Mission of Azerbaijan to the EU

**Muslum Mammadov***Director*

Ocaz - Office de Communication de l'Azerbaïdjan

**Sevinj Mammadova***Assistant*

Mission of Azerbaijan to the EU

**Elmar Mammadyarov***Minister*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Azerbaijan

**Pauline Massart***Senior Manager*

Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Col. Brendan McAloon***Defence Attaché*

Embassy of the United States of America to Belgium

**Raphaël Metais***Academic Assistant*

College of Europe

**Pascal Meunier***Senior Vice President, International Development*

Thales Group

## List of participants

---

**Stanislava Mladenova**

*Business Analyst*

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Federico Mozzi**

*Project Assistant*

Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)

**Yilmaz Muhammet**

*Advisor*

Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (TUSKON)

**Antonio Neves Costa**

*Consultant*

APCO Worldwide Brussels Office

**George Vlad Niculescu**

*Director of Programmes*

Centre for East European and Asian Studies

**Pavel Ogorodnikov**

*Second Secretary*

Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to NATO

**Neval Orbay**

*Counsellor*

Mission of Turkey to the EU

**Maria Joao Paixao**

*Associate*

Brunswick Group

**Amanda Paul**

*Policy Analyst*

European Policy Centre (EPC)

**Isabelle Pellier**

*Chargée de mission*

Permanent Representation of France to the EU

**Aline Pestana**

*Independent Media Consultant*

**Victoria Pirker**

*Project Manager*

Human Rights Without Frontiers

**Ekaterina Poletaeva**

*Trade analyst*

Apex

**Timm Rentrop**

*Legal Officer, EU Labour Law*

European Commission

**Kyriakos Revelas**

*Senior Security Policy Analyst*

European External Action Service (EEAS)

**Rainer Ruge**

*Former EU Official*

**Lailuma Sadid**

*Second Secretary*

Embassy of Afghanistan to Belgium

**Hilde Sagon**

*Legal Advisor*

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

**Giovanni Salici**

*Official*

European Commission

**Jan Peter Schoffer Petriček**

*Head of Civil Society Relations Section*

European Commission

**José Antonio Segura Escamilla**

*Counsellor*

Embassy of Spain to Belgium

**Emil Seyidov**

*Voluntary National Contributor*

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

**Michael Simm**

*Policy and Planning Officer*

European Defence Agency (EDA)

**René J. Steiner**

*Administrator*

European Commission

**Dimash Syzdykov**

*Journalist*

CN Kazinform

**Gérard Taquin**

*Administrator*

Council of the European Union

**Edyta Tarczysnka**

*Advisor*

Group of the European People's Party (EPP)

**Bjørn H. Tretvoll**  
*Senior Advisor EU Affairs*  
Trans Adriatic Pipeline

**Mustafa Osman Turan**  
*Deputy Permanent Representative*  
Mission of Turkey to the EU

**Ivo Vajgl**  
*Member*  
European Parliament

**Lutgarde Vertongen**  
*Independent Consultant*

**Jean-Arnold Vinois**  
*Director Acting, Security of Supply & Networks*  
European Commission

**Kostyantyn Voytovsky**  
*Counsellor*  
Mission of Ukraine to NATO

**Col. Markus Wohlhauser**  
*Deputy Military Representative*  
Mission of Switzerland to NATO

**Renata Zaleska**  
*Consultant*  
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)





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**Jaap De Hoop Scheffer**, former NATO Secretary General



**Javier Solana**, former EU High Representative for CFSP

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**“Cyber has redefined the front lines of national security”**

**Willam J. Lynn III**, US Deputy Secretary of Defense



**“The internet has become a national asset”**

**Suleyman Anil**, Head of the Cyber Defence Section, NATO



**“The defences that we have today are defences against the threats of yesterday”**

**Jakub Boratynski**, Head of Unit, DG Home, European Commission



**“The internet is a blank page for Europe to reinvent itself on”**

**Robert Madelin**, Director General for Information Society and Media, European Commission



**“Any future conflict will include a cyber dimension”**

**Tunne Kelam**, Member of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, European Parliament

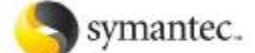
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For further information on SDA membership, contact us at:  
Tel: +32 (0)2 737 91 48 | E-mail: [info@securitydefenceagenda.org](mailto:info@securitydefenceagenda.org)

## **SECURITY & DEFENCE AGENDA (SDA)**

Bibliothèque Solvay, Parc Léopold, 137 rue Belliard, B-1040, Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 (0)2 737 91 48 Fax: +32 (0)2 736 32 16 E-mail: [info@securitydefenceagenda.org](mailto:info@securitydefenceagenda.org)

[www.securitydefenceagenda.org](http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org)  
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/secdefagenda>