

Georgia: the first meeting between Obama and Saakashvili

On 19 November in Lisbon at the NATO summit a meeting was held between US President Barack Obama and the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, the first one since Obama took the office in January 2009. The long-awaited meeting and the US President's strong support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity was received with great satisfaction by Tbilisi. Georgia is hoping to extend the scope of its cooperation with the US and overcome the distance in the West's relations with Tbilisi that appeared after the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008.

The meeting of the two presidents was devoted to "a further strengthening of bilateral relations and an extension of the range of cooperation". During the meeting Barack Obama thanked Georgia for its significant involvement in Afghanistan and – according to the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – expressed his approval of the political, economic and security reforms introduced in the country.

Georgia has long been making efforts that would lead to a meeting between Saakashvili and Obama. It was held nearly two years after Obama took office, which proves that Washington's support for Georgia has considerably decreased since the war of 2008. The fact that the meeting did eventually take place is for Georgia the most important event of the NATO summit in Lisbon. It strengthens President Saakashvili's position on the domestic scene and internationally and gives hope for at least a partial return to the level of the American-Georgian cooperation from before August 2008. <MMat>