

SUMMARY

The deployment of US Missile Defense in Europe is being discussed since 2001, but it has been only in the last several weeks that a public debate flared up – especially in the press and in various conferences – about the potential positive and negative consequences of projected participation of Poland in this undertaking. The surprising feature of this debate is the low level of understanding of the subject. It seems that the whole background of “Missile Defense” constitutes a sort of secret knowledge, understandable only to a handful of experts from public institutions who have years of experience with the topic, and a few commentators. Lack of comprehension of what really is the US Missile Defense, of the aims that its creators have had in mind, and, most of all – of what is the application of individual parts of the system, causes many of the (pseudo)arguments repeated by its opponents to be lacking in relevance, sometimes illogical, and sometimes even absurd. Equally deep concern stems from the lack of knowledge about the US international and security policy in the post-Cold War period, resulting in a serious limitation of discussion on strategic level – relating to long-term consequences of Poland’s participation in the US Missile Defense program.

The year 1989 opened a new chapter in the contemporary history of Poland, which had to face new challenges and threats to national security. Even though the 1990s were dominated by the issues of European and trans-Atlantic security, since the fall of bipolar system Poland has observed and noticed negative global phenomena that emerged in the post-Cold War global order, which was expressed most fully in the “National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland” published on the 22nd July 2003. Polish perception of the proliferation of WMD weapons and missiles issue, combined with the awareness of other problems of national foreign and security policy (especially in regard of relations with the United States) in the last 15 years, undoubtedly has influenced the Polish government’s approach to the US missile defense question.

The aim of this book is to present the origins of, and the idea behind, the contemporary US Missile Defense program, including the aims of its expansion within the borders of the United States and beyond, and to outline the approach of selected countries, with a special account of the closest partners and neighbors of Poland. This book is also an attempt to depict the extremely complex technical side of the MD – its main elements and sub-systems, the core idea of the functioning of individual components and the system as a whole, as well as hindrances that prevent it so far from being fully operational. The most important aim of this work, however, is to make an attempt at a definition of potential place and role of Poland in the MD system, including positive and negative implications for its security, should it decide to shelter itself under the American anti-missile umbrella.