

Communication Reduces Conflict

By Byron A. Ellis – April 04, 2012



Conflict is often about misunderstandings between conflicting parties or one party asserting perceived superiority. In the conflict developing between the United States (US) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), both parties call the other bellicose and provocative.

The US on Wednesday indicated that it will deploy sophisticated anti-missile system to Guam. On Thursday DPRK indicated that it would "take powerful practical military counteractions" against the US provocative actions. And, the US call DPRK threats provocative.

The conflict needs a grown-up that can put the conflicting parties in time out, or both US and DPRK needs some self-moderation.

Both parties are not really talking to one another, rather they are talking at each other.

They ought to be talking about the nature of the issue or issues that causes conflicts, as well as, areas of agreement, cooperation and confidence building measures.

The US should seek to solve the conflict in a constructive, rather than a destructive fashion. Moreover, it should tone down on its upmanship, without conceding any defensive ground.

Good negotiators and great countries resolve conflicts in a constructive fashion. Upmanship, however, could lead to a destructive resolution.

Both conflicting parties want to outdo the other, which is a dangerous game. Such a strategy will lead negative attitudes towards each other, exaggeration of dissimilarities and could lead to irreversible military confrontations.

The US should seek to build a communicative bridge with DPRK, recognizing that communication is a two-way process. Thus, each party must understand and mitigate the sensitivities of the other party.