

# KEYNOTE SPEECH

by **Hon. Jose C. de Venecia, Jr.**

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Maria Luz C. Vilches, Vice President for the Loyola Schools; Conference Director Oliver John Quintana, professors, students, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to be a keynote speaker at this 3<sup>rd</sup> Ateneo Korean Studies Conference, with the theme: “Revisiting the Korean War: History, Memory and its Implications on Contemporary Nation-Building,” here at my alma mater that I am proud of, the Ateneo de Manila. For my heroes include Ateneans Jose Rizal, Raul Manglapus, Fr. Horacio dela Costa, and recently Bobby Paterno, and of course, our own beloved Jesuits.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF A KOREA-PHILIPPINES UNIVERSITY

In February, 2010, in Seoul, I proposed to then Foreign Minister Yu Myung Hwan the establishment in Metro Manila of a Korea-Philippines University, following my earlier discussions with then Korean Ambassador in Manila, H.E. Choi Joong-Kyung, the Vice Speaker of the Korean National Assembly, H.E. Moon Heesang, and other senior leaders of the Korean government.

I thought the project would strengthen the economic and political partnership between Korea and the Philippines through an educational facility for development and joint research activities. After all, the Philippines was the first Asian country to send troops to defend the south during the Korean war of the 1950s.

The school would be designed to put in place mechanisms for the conduct of collaborative research and development programs and projects. The relatively more advanced facilities and training sites in Korea could be replicated in the Philippines. Foreign Minister Yu's response was positive and he set the preliminary process in motion. He has since retired and now the project is in limbo.

Perhaps the Korean and Philippine Governments should revive this proposal as the benefits of a Korea-Philippines University will be valuable and its legacy and operation will endure for hundreds of years and be a continuing testament to the special friendship and partnership between the Korean and Filipino peoples. Korean Official Development Assistance (ODA) has invested in many finite infrastructure projects in the Philippines which are usually forgotten after a few decades but a living university is timeless and can last for hundreds of years. If and when revived, perhaps the Ateneo de Manila University can be a local partner in this project.

I ask the popular Korean Ambassador here, H.E. Kim Jaeshin, and our equally popular Philippine Ambassador in Seoul, H.E. Raul Hernandez, to see how we can reactivate this project. Perhaps the Ateneo Korean Studies Center might take a look at this noble cause and consult with Ambassadors Kim

and Hernandez and with his active predecessor, Ambassador Luis Cruz.

### ICAPP SECRETARIAT IN SEOUL

Earlier, in 2006, as my small, humble contribution in helping encourage direct talks between Seoul and Pyongyang, I transferred from Manila to Seoul the Secretariat of the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), which I founded and established in Manila in September, 2000 and remain as Chairman of its Standing Committee. The ICAPP Secretariat is today most active in Seoul and Asia. The Korean Workers Party of North Korea is a member of ICAPP.

ICAPP now counts some 340 ruling, opposition, and independent eligible parties from 52 countries in Asia and is headed by my Co-Chairman and Secretary General Chung Eui-yong, an experienced diplomat and former Member of the Korean National Assembly.

### ASIA'S CONFLICT ZONES

Today we sadly note the most discouraging ongoing multiple crises in our region: the extremist violence and the wars in Iraq, Syria, and hostilities in Libya, the continuing violence in Afghanistan, the unending dispute over Kashmir between India and Pakistan, the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Azerbaijan and Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the continuing dangers and fear of explosion in the Korean Peninsula, the Buddhist and Muslim Rohingya difficulties in Myanmar, similar problems in Southern Thailand, the maritime tensions in the South China

Sea and East China Sea, the Muslim and Communist insurgencies in the Philippines, which, however, now indicate signs of possible settlement.

### THE KOREAN WAR

As we know, in the case of the Korean War, between 1950 and 1953, it was relatively short but exceptionally bloody. Nearly five million people were killed. More than half of these—about 10 percent of Korea’s pre-war population—were civilians. This rate of civilian casualties was higher than World War II’s and Vietnam’s.

### IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES SHOULDN’T GET IN THE WAY

Friends: In Northeast Asia today, we need to develop pragmatic and creative methods that will try to rebuild North-South relations in the Korean Peninsula—without hopefully allowing too many of the most difficult ideological differences to get in the way.

My interest in such an outcome is personal as well as professional—because my earliest voluntary errands in Philippine foreign policy involved North Korea.

In 1990, I visited Pyongyang via Beijing from Manila as then acting Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, in an informal pioneering effort to try to open Philippine diplomatic relations with North Korea, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)—to try to discourage it from giving material and moral support at the time to guerrillas of the Communist New People’s Army (NPA) in the Philippines.

This was at a time Pyongyang itself was also trying to broaden its East Asian friendships; and I met with the legendary North Korean leader, President Kim Il Sung, at his mountain villa north of Pyongyang. I was accompanied then by Rep. Miguel Romero, now deceased, business leader Len Oreta, who is married to the younger sister of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino, then Rep. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, and civic and education leader Nestor Kalaw.

Despite his forbidding reputation, I found Kim Il Sung widely and keenly interested in the outside world: our appointment of ten minutes stretched to more than one hour as he and I exchanged views on many issues. I was later informed it is rare that he entertains visitors beyond 30 minutes.

THE SOUTH WILL BE DESTROYED.  
BUT WE WILL ALSO BE DESTROYED.

When I inquired into the possibility of another war on the Korean Peninsula, he dismissed the liability outright. Conflict would be foolish—he said emphatically—it would only cause mutual destruction in both North and South Korea that neither side could afford to suffer. He told me: “If we attack the South, the South will be destroyed. But we in the North will also be destroyed.”

Thus, when today Pyongyang, with H.E. President Kim Jong-Un, his grandson, and previously his son, H.E. President Kim Jong-Il, rattles the sounds of war in the Korean Peninsula, I remember those words of practical wisdom from the late Kim Il Sung.

Most importantly, at the same time, in response to my request and appeal, Kim Il Sung did me and my colleagues honor and he promised and indeed put in writing that North Korea would not give aid and comfort to our NPA guerrillas—who had, by then, been fighting to overthrow the Philippine State for more than two decades. President Kim Il Sung, the founder of North Korea, assured me that by the time we leave for Beijing en route to Manila, the North Korean government would have the letter ready.

#### PHILIPPINES-NORTH KOREA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

And on my invitation, President Kim Il Sung sent to Manila after a few weeks his Deputy Premier Kim Dahl Hyun to finalize our agreement with our then Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus, which resulted in diplomatic relations between Manila and Pyongyang.

That was the most successful result of our trip to North Korea. Today the North Korean Ambassador in Bangkok is accredited to Manila, presents his credentials to the Philippine President in Manila, and visits Manila from time to time.

I had since turned over to then President Corazon Aquino the priceless North Korean document signed by North Korean Deputy Premier Kim Dahl Hyun committing the North Korean Government not to give aid and comfort to the insurgent New People's Army. I specifically asked this document from the President of North Korea (DPRK) and he authorized Deputy Premier Kim to sign it and handed to us. I in turn proudly presented the document to then President Cory Aquino in Malacañang when we returned to Manila.

Yes, through thick and thin, that agreement which we forged in Pyongyang in the summer of 1990 has kept our two states friendly until now.

On a related development, I must say that I have since developed close relations with the CPP NPA-NDF leaders Jose Maria “Joma” Sison; my high school classmate at De La Salle Luis Jalandoni, then CPP-NPA chief negotiator with the Philippine government on the ongoing peace talks, and current senior adviser; and now with Fidel Agcaoile, their current chief negotiator dealing with the Government in apparently positive peace talks progressing in Norway.

## TWO KOREAS SHOULD ADAPT TO GLOBAL CHANGES

Friends: We must point out that despite the occasional harsh rhetoric on both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel, I believe governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society organizations, and media must encourage and support direct talks between Seoul and Pyongyang.

As we know in past years, direct talks re-started some years ago between Washington and Pyongyang—in New York and Geneva, but had not met with success.

Indeed direct talks between North and South will complement renewed plans for high-level explorations. Perhaps they could even catalyze the long-suspended Six-Power Talks to prevent nuclear proliferation in the Korean Peninsula. Perhaps direct bilateral or multilateral talks could even lead to agreement on a road map to eventual unification. But these talks have not reopened for a long time now.

Today the basic fact is that the distribution of power in the world is fast-changing—particularly in East Asia—and the Korean Peninsula must adapt to these epochal transformations. Consider how even once-hermetic Myanmar has come out of semi-isolation, emerged from military dictatorship and has today lifted the Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, for many years under house arrest, to power.

On another instance, Vietnam emerged from three difficult successive wars, against the French, the Americans, and the Chinese, winning against great powers, and its socialist government adopting a market economy, lifted its people from poverty to become today a rising peaceful economic power. North Korea can be like Vietnam, which is already emerging as a power in Southeast Asia.

#### THE GREATEST EXAMPLE IS HOW TWO GERMANIES COMBINED

The greatest example of course, is how the two Germanies finally emerged from Cold War confrontation and totally united under Chancellor Helmut Kohl, to become today the predominant economic power in Europe.

And China, under the unforgettable leader Deng Xiaoping, opened China to the world, lifted more than 400 million people from poverty and introduced appreciable elements of free enterprise capitalism to China's socialist economy, which has propelled China to the second largest in the global economy and perhaps No. 1 within 10 years.

## ASEAN PLUS 4

Perhaps the two Koreas should begin with some degree of economic cooperation. And the obvious way which of course will take time would be for Pyongyang to be invited to associate itself with the East Asian Economic Grouping of the 10 Southeast Asian states and the three Northeast Asian states – China, Japan and South Korea. The ASEAN Plus 3 could become ASEAN Plus 4. This will be a long process but the idea can be broached to Pyongyang and be most tempting.

Yes, indeed, North Korea should not be left alone and isolated as we push for political and economic integration in Asia.

In my view, the immediate task of the parliaments and mainstream political parties of the Republic of Korea and the Communist Korean Workers' Party (KWP) of the North is to draw up a road map toward unification.

Political parties and civil society organizations should network with the leading think-tanks of the U.S., Asia, and Europe to envision the architecture of Korean confederation and unification, revive Seoul's Kim Dae Jung "Sunshine Policy," promote a bipartisan approach among the major parties of the South, and draw on South Korea's vaunted economic power, to help build the economy of the North under an economic confederation of Korean unity.

The Asian, European, and U.S. parliaments could organize a program and send delegations to the North Korea legislature; their Ministers of Agriculture and Tourism might interact with their North Korean counterparts to look into the recurring causes of famine in the North and to develop job-creating and foreign exchange-earning tourism there.

The great Northeast Asia, Western and Russian industries can look into North Korea's hydrocarbons, mining, and hydro-electric potential.

#### REVIVAL OF SIX-PARTY TALKS AND KOREAN UNIFICATION

We believe that the lingering conflict and potentially dangerous flashpoint in the Korean Peninsula with North Korea, now nuclear-armed and continuously testing improved nuclear weaponry, and even missiles launched from submarines, could be resolved peacefully through diplomacy, cooperation and bilateral and/or multilateral dialogue. No matter how most difficult, it must be constantly tried and pursued.

We urge the revival of the long-postponed Six-Party talks among the U.S., Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, and North Korea which would contribute to enhancing political stability and security not only in the Korean Peninsula but in the Asia Pacific region, but most importantly perhaps lead to unite the two Koreas, forswear war, and together build a strong, united prosperous first-world nation for the Korean peoples in the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Indeed, the successful dynamics of North Korea's nuclear development could and should be channelled to economic mobilization.

And the 6-Nation Talks could and should have a business-focused auxiliary to develop economic joint ventures for deployment in the Korean north.

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE FUTURE

Ladies and gentlemen: In a speech at the former East German city of Dresden in 2014, South Korean President Park Geun-hye said: “Just as the German people secured freedom, prosperity and peace by tearing down the Berlin Wall, we too must tear down barriers in our march towards a new future on the Korean Peninsula.”

Dear friends, we agree that for our peoples, the age of ideological conflict is over and should be over for everyone. All our countries now need to move beyond containment and confrontation toward cooperation and collective prosperity. Indeed, there is no other option.

## WRITING OUR OWN HISTORY

For those who even want to revive the forces of colonialism and imperialism, let me pass on what I said in a speech before Asians sometime ago, and I quote: “For half a millennium, we, Asians, were peoples to whom things were done.

Once we in Asia were no more than spectators to the rise and fall of foreign empires.

Now we have regained command of our own fortunes.

Now we have laid a foundation for the new chapter of economic and political engagement.

Now we can begin to write our own histories.”

Thank you and good morning.

# PANEL I: PEFTOK: NARRATIVES AND RECOLLECTIONS

## INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS

by **Dr. Maria Elissa J. Lao**

*Chair, Department of Political Science  
Ateneo de Manila University*

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Good morning, everyone.

It is my distinct honor to introduce the speakers for the first session: PEFTOK Narratives and Recollections.

Let's begin with Ret. Col. Paterno V. Vilorio, who was born in Laur, Nueva Ecija on November 12, 1923. His father was a municipal treasurer, while his mother was an entrepreneur who managed a small retail store. He fought in World War II as a 20-year-old guerrilla with the Luzon Guerrilla Army Forces. After graduating with a degree in accounting from the Far Eastern University in 1949, he joined the Armed Forces of the Philippines as a field artillery officer the following year. He saw action in the Korean War with the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea as an artillery forward officer with the 20<sup>th</sup> Battalion Combat Team and was awarded the Gold Cross Medal by the Philippine government for conspicuous courage and gallantry in action. He is also the founder and former chair and chief executive officer of the Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corporation and

serves as the President of the PEFTOK Veterans Association, Incorporated. Please give him a round of applause.

Ret. Maj. Maximo P. Young was born in Toledo City, Cebu on July 13, 1922. While working as a shipping clerk aboard the MV Legaspi, he got conscripted into the United States Army in the Far East when the Second World War broke out in December 1941. The crew successfully performed the difficult feat of transporting food supplies and fighting soldiers to and from the Visayas to Corregidor, despite strict monitoring by Japanese war ships. For this, he was awarded the Silver Star Medal by the US Army. After the war, he received a scholarship and went schooling at the Fort Knox Armored Tank School in Kentucky. With the onset of the Korean War, he was among the first combat soldiers dispatched to Korea as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion Combat Team of PEFTOK. He received the Gold Cross Medal for this. In the Philippine Army, he rose to the rank of Major and presently is busy helping and assisting his fellow war veterans in his capacity as Vice President of the PEFTOK Veterans Association, Incorporated, and currently as the President of the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT Chapter. Please give a round of applause to Ret. Maj. Young.

Ret. Col. Augusto S. Flores was born in Bongabong, Nueva Ecija on August 28, 1932. After graduating from FEU in 1950, Col. Flores enrolled at the Mapua Institute of Technology to pursue further studies. He enlisted in the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion Combat Team and landed on Korean soil to fight the communist insurgency in March 1953. During the six months that he took part in the Korean War, he was promoted a number of times—three to be exact—from Private First Class

to Corporal, then to Sergeant. He was commissioned in the regular force of the AFP and retired as full Colonel in August of 1979. He is currently serving as President of the Katipunan ng mga Kawal na May Kapansanan sa Pilipinas, an organization of soldiers with disabilities, and the Director of the Alyansa ng mga May Kapansanang Pinoy, a federation of organizations of persons with disabilities. He's also formerly Secretary of PEFTOK Veterans Association, Incorporated. Please give a round of applause to Ret. Col. Flores.

And Ret. Gen. Miguel M. Villamor, who was born on March 27, 1926. Gen. Villamor finished his early education in Cebu, and after the Second World War, he was admitted to the Philippine Military Academy in 1947. He was among the first class of 62 brand-new Lieutenants who graduated in 1951. He was enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT and actively participated in the anti-dissident movement that time. From 1953 to 54, he took part in the Korean War, specifically being assigned near the Demilitarized Zone. After the war, he was among those who were sent to Fort Valley in Georgia to study at the Advanced Officers Infantry School, and since then, he has been involved in various positions in the Philippine Army, once serving as Camp Commander at Camp Aguinaldo in 1970. He retired in 1977. He then became Chief of Staff of Brigadier General Pelayo Cruz and acting Commissioner of the Finance Ministry in 1986. He then re-retired at the age of 65 in 1991. Nowadays, at the robust and active age of 90, he still serves as the Vice President for Operations for Well Cargo Customs Brokerage and as Public Relations Officer of the PEFTOK Veterans Association, Incorporated. Please give a round of applause to Ret. Gen. Miguel Villamor.

**Ret. Col. Paterno V. Vilorio, Ph.D.**  
*20<sup>th</sup> Battalion Combat Team (BCT)*  
*President, PEFTOK Veterans Association, Inc.*

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Mga Kapamilya, Kapuso, at Kapatid,

Umagang kay ganda po sa inyong lahat.

It was a different time. A little more than a century has passed and yet, men of that time were different from today. Promises were kept and men came to the aid of their friends. Men, back then, did not go into war for convenience or vested interests – they did for honor and for democracy.

Being a fledging independent country, the Philippines was barely out of its infantile stage when it entered the Korean War. Its youth not a hindrance in its desire to fulfill its obligation as co-signer of the United Nations Charter and its moral duty to come to the aid of a country it had recently established diplomatic relations with.

Like most countries at that time, the Philippines was still recovering from the damages of the Second World War. Despite the government being almost bankrupt, and despite its own insurrection problems, the country came to Korea's aid. When the UN issued the call, the Philippines was one of the first three to answer, the first country in Asia to heed the call.

Even though the country's military was in the midst of rebuilding - at that time, the Philippine Military had only 10 battalions - the government saw it fit to send one of its finest

Battalion Combat Teams, its only armored battalion, the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT.

Without much of a backward glance, Filipino soldiers and officers of the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT landed in the port of Pusan in Southeastern Korea barely three months after North Korea invaded the South, the first of five battalions to fight in the Korean War.

Experienced in anti-guerrilla warfare, the Philippine contingent, known as the PEFTOK or the Philippine Expeditionary Force to Korea, was mainly used in anti-guerrilla campaigns for the first six months of its tour of duty in Korea.

With the United Nations Command (UNC) successful in decimating and driving back the North Koreans, it was decided that the Allied Forces push on to North Korea to eliminate the remnants of the North Korean Army.

This action led to the involvement of the Chinese and as the Allied forces were pulling back to South Korea, the Philippine contingent was one of those who were tasked to hold the defensive line during the Chinese Spring Offensive. The stretch assigned to the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT was near the Village of Yuldong and was the only part of the defensive line that was not overrun by the Chinese.

### THE BATTLE OF YULDONG

The battle of Yuldong showed the world the true grit and prowess of the Filipino soldier in the battlefield. The 10<sup>th</sup> BCT, with only 900 officers and men were able to push back a

regiment of the Chinese People's Volunteer (CPV) Army and were successful in holding their part of the line.

But success was not achieved without great loss: 50 men gave their lives, including Lt. Jose Artiaga, Jr, who valiantly stood his ground and encouraged his men amidst the wave upon wave of Chinese soldiers. After his company was overrun, his friend, Capt. Conrado Yap staged a counterattack to retrieve the wounded and the dead. Capt. Yap himself lost his life in this brave and selfless act.

The battle of Yuldong is one of several battles, and probably the most important battle PEFTOK was part of. The Filipinos were the only ones who held their ground during the battle and were instrumental in stopping the Chinese Spring Offensive. Considered one of the bloodiest battles in the war, the Philippine Contingent emerged victorious.

### THE BATTLE FOR HILL EERIE

By the time the other BCTs came to Korea, the war had turned into a stalemate brought about by the Armistice negotiation to end the conflict. The open warfare that the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT took part in gave way to a series of patrols, raids, and small-scale but nevertheless, vicious clashes between both sides who wanted to “improve” their position and territories.

One of these clashes was for the infamous hill that changed hands several times – Hill Eerie. The battle for this hill was one of the many battles the 20<sup>th</sup> BCT, who had taken over the banner of the PEFTOK from the 10<sup>th</sup> BCT, took part in. Having gained a reputation as “machine gun artillery” because of its accuracy and high volume of fire, the 20<sup>th</sup> BCT was just as fierce in the battlefield as the BCT it replaced.

## THE BATTLE FOR COMBAT OUTPOST NO. 8

The 19<sup>th</sup> BCT was the third contingent of the Philippine Expeditionary Forces in Korea. It distinguished itself with victorious battles for hills dominating the Chorwon-Sibyon-ni corridor, which was considered the most vulnerable sector of the UNC's front line.

In the battle for Combat Outpost No. 8, despite being bombarded by massive artillery fire and attacked by a massive force, the battalion stood its ground. After four days of fighting, the Filipino soldiers sent the Chinese retreating, leaving behind over 500 dead. The Filipinos then ascended Hill 191 and in full view of the Chinese, planted the Filipino flag in the summit, an act of defiance, declaring victory in this important battle.

## THE BATTLE OF CHRISTMAS HILL

As the war was winding down, the succeeding BCTs did not see as much action as the previous ones. The 14<sup>th</sup> BCT was tasked to deny the enemy use of the valley floor in the Satae-ri Valley, one of the main invasion routes in the west central front.

Aggressive patrols into enemy territory sparked short but vicious close quarter combats. The unit also took part in the rescue of the ROK 20<sup>th</sup> Division attacked by the Chinese; after which two infantry companies from the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT attacked Christmas Hill to rescue an overrun American infantry company. The assault was a success and Christmas Hill was regained by the Allied Forces.

## PEACE AND REBUILDING

An Armistice ending fighting in the Korean War between the UNC and its communist foes was signed and implemented on July 27, 1953.

Immediately thereafter, the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT was pulled from the front line and moved to the Yangyu Valley where the battalion helped in the rebuilding of shattered Korean villages.

The last BCT to be sent to Korea was the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT who picked up where the 14<sup>th</sup> BCT left off. This BCT never saw action but mostly helped in the rebuilding of the villages near its station and after an eventful 13 months, on May 13, 1955, the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT returned home.

## LEGACY OF THE PEFTOK

Although the PEFTOK was first and foremost a war machine, its later incarnations also helped in rebuilding Korea. All in all 7,420 Filipinos fought to keep democracy and freedom alive in Korea. Out of these, 112 lost their lives, 299 were wounded, 41 were POWS who were later repatriated during POW exchange and 16 are missing up to this day.

Whenever we see Korea today, we cannot help but feel proud that we have been a part of your country's history because in our own little way, we have contributed to the building of this country. Seeing how progressive and how developed Korea is right now makes us feel that our sacrifices were not for naught. We and our fellow soldiers have not shed blood in vain.

We, the PEFTOK Veterans, may be in the sunsets of our lives but we know that the friendship and brotherhood

between the Korean and Filipino people will live on as we share a common past and together we have shed blood. We have fought tyranny and oppression and we have emerged victorious. Such bond can never be broken.

Let me leave you with the quote from Shakespeare's Henry V which, for me, sums up the relationship between Koreans and Filipinos:

“From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered-  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me,  
Shall be my brother.”

Thank you and good day!