

# Open Letter to Kim Jong-eun

## YOUR FIRST 100 DAYS ACTION PLAN

*By Robert Hargrove*

### **WHY YOUR FIRST 100 DAYS MATTERS**

Since Franklin Roosevelt, America's 32<sup>nd</sup> President, took office in 1932 and declared his first 100 day plan in the middle of the Great Depression, leaders throughout the world have used their first 100 days, not just to learn the job, but also as a launch pad for their political and economic agenda. This period of time is often marked by a newly installed leader thinking big and acting boldly to bring about needed change before the window of opportunity closes. One thing is certain, the world will view whatever you do during this period of time as a bellwether of things to come.



In taking over the leadership of North Korea, you will face, in Shakespeare's words, great expectations. Your first 100 days will be pivotally important in establishing the foundations of your long-term success or failure. It's a time when people in your country and all over the world will be straining to take your measure as a leader, "*Is he up to the job?*" It's a time when you have the opportunity to establish a vision of an Impossible Future for North Korea—from third world to first by 2020. Why not? It's a time to address 'A' level priorities, like improving relations with South Korea. It's a time to secure early wins that would build personal credibility and momentum—like extending an olive branch to the global community and bringing food aid to your country so people don't starve over this long cold winter.

**The question on everyone's mind:** Will Kim Jong-eun be his own man and strike on his own, calling forth a new era of peace and prosperity for his country or will he merely follow in the footsteps of his father whose actions have brought suffering to the North Korean people and caused continued threats to regional( global) security? Your first 100 days as "The Great Successor" is a

time when small words (that suggest a shift in the wind) and symbolic actions can have a big impact. It's important to have a story ready day one, as key leaders both in Pyongyang and around the world will immediately be looking for signals of your intentions. Imagine you are standing up and saying something like: "I respect my grandfather's and father's accomplishments, but it's time for a change." It would be like a shot from a gun heard round the world.

One thing I would advise is to not just come into the job with a smile and a coronation, as many leaders do, but with a 100 day plan, followed by swift and immediate action to improve the lot of the North Korean people and increase global security. One of the first things you must do in setting forth your 100 day plan is to create a burning platform that change is actually needed, so as not to stir up the reactionaries in your government. This should not be difficult considering your three biggest problems are that your economy is slow and inefficient, you cannot feed your own people, and the entire world has sanctions against you.

## GETTING READY TO CREATE YOUR FIRST 100 DAY ACTION PLAN

### **Accelerate your leadership development by finding a coach**

You are a relatively young person without much leadership experience thrust into a position of great power. It's therefore important that you find a leadership transition coach, like your uncle Jang Song-taek, Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission, who understands the political chessboard and who can help you consolidate your power. Yet it's also important that you find a leadership coach, preferably from outside North Korea who can accelerate your development as a leader, providing you both a moral compass in making decisions and an objective point of view. Your coach should help you to understand that there is a difference between being a real leader who is attuned to the throbbing human needs and wants of their people, and a power wielder who is attuned only to their own self-interest. Your first 100 days are a great opportunity to demonstrate that you have learned this lesson.

### **Bring your ministers together and honestly assess North Korea's situation**

There is a fable people tell about the Emperor who has no clothes. Everyone could see this except the emperor himself, which if he had known, would have been embarrassing. Here are three things people in the rest of the world see about North Korea that may or may not be apparent to you: 1) While you enjoy a cooperative relationship with China, your country is considered a ter-

rorist, police state by the majority of nations around the world. This keeps North Korea from enjoying the advantages of the global economy and makes economic development difficult or impossible. 2) As you know, while a small percentage of your people who are employed by the government live fairly well, the vast majority of your people cannot meet their basic earthly needs such as heating and lighting, food and nutrition, health care. 3) Your people are denied basic human freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of information.

### **Come up with a strategy that matches your situation**

The “winning strategy” your grandfather and father used was based on communism, aggressive foreign policy and self-reliance has run out of gas. You need to create a new winning strategy consistent with the betterment of the North Korea people and global stability.

**1) From Communism to Capitalism.** The primary driver of high growth economies, said Milton Freedom, is the desire to get rich. Why not adopt Deng Tsiao Peng’s strategy by throwing off the communist mantle and embracing capitalism. As Deng said, “I don’t care if it’s a white cat or black cat, as long as it catches mice.”

**2) From Self Reliance to Feeling Globalization’s Embrace.** Your next strategy should involve recognizing that today, becoming part of the global economy trumps self-reliance as the path toward economic prosperity. This means you need to send a very clear signal in your first 100 days that you intend to embrace globalization and its “rule sets” (starting with obeying international law).

**3) From Fanaticism to the Four Freedoms.** FDR, America’s 32<sup>nd</sup> President, made an inaugural address in his first 100 days in which he promised to build a country based on the four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. Why not follow his example?

## Create a 100 Day Action Plan

Now that you have a strategy to at least think about, the next step is to move from that strategy to creating a 100 day action plan. Put up three large pieces of paper and fill each up: 1) things I will absolutely do in my first 30 days, 2) things I will absolutely do in my first 60 days, and 3) things I will absolutely do in my first 90 days.

**To prepare for this exercise it might be good to think in terms of three waves of change:**

First 30 days—Secure early wins

Second 30 days—Attack ‘A’ level priorities

Third 30 days—Establish your long term vision

### **Securing Early Wins**

As you are taking over the leadership of your country at a very young age, I think it is pivotal that you secure early wins that will help you establish political capital, build personal credibility and momentum toward your long term vision. When President Lula of Brazil was elected to office, his operating credo was “do the obvious,” which involved helping the poor. He made it possible for chronically poor people to get small government loans to start a business, made access to public schools more widely available, and opened up free medical clinics for children (as long as they were enrolled in school). He recently left office with an 87% popularity rating. You could do something similar, but may have to make some tough tradeoffs. For example, by suspending the development of nuclear weapons, you could open a flood gate of international aid to North Korea, bring foods, medicine, and fuel to people who much need them.

### **Attack ‘A’ Level Priorities**

You have to admit that no matter how much righteous indignation, a 50-year family feud is very wearing on all concerned. South Korea may be your enemy, but as old cousins they may be just waiting to be your best friend. Think of what you could do in your first 100 days to create a much better relationship with South Korea. President Lee Myung-bak (who your father crossed swords with) will soon leave office. The 2012 Presidential elections in South Korea will focus in large part on the candidates debating their policy toward North Korea. You can shape the debate by extending an olive branch in your first 100 days that gets people to see your country in a new way and act in a new way toward it. For example, suspending nuclear weapons development in conjunction with small symbolic acts, such as apologizing for the sinking of the Destroyer Cheonan, could promote a One Korean Peninsula “economic cooperation,” and could result in South Korean companies making investments in your nation that could dramatically accelerate the development of your economy.

### **Establish Your Long Term Vision**

I personally very much admired Prime Minister Lee of Singapore who created a vision of his country after the Japanese occupation in World War II of “From third world to first in 25 years.” I think if you had the courage to stand up in your first 100 days and declare an Impossible Future for your country of a similar nature, you would not only gain the respect of the political and military bodies within your country, but attract help from all over the world. The good news is that you are young enough to not only stand for such a vision, and to plan for it, but to drive it to completion.



**Go public with your 100 day action plan, and expect to be held to account**  
Once you hone your first 100 Day Action Plan, the next step is to make it public, telling people you intend to be held to account for what you have said. Additionally, I would advise asking every minister in your government to come up with their own 100 day action plan of reforms that they are going to bring about for the benefit of the Korean people. Ask them to make these public. At least within the government itself and hold people accountable for results. Sweep out those who don't follow your leadership by taking swift action with a big broom.

**Get other people on your team to create their own 100 day action plan**  
If you want to bring about real reforms, but are concerned with reactionaries, highlight 1 to 3 burning platform issues that you absolutely need to attend to. Then go all out to get the buy in you need to drive the necessary changes needed to address the issue. For example, opening up meaningful talks with South Korea, opening up food banks with the help of international agencies to make sure no one goes hungry, inviting high tech executives from America, South Korea, or Japan to see how technology could help solve the nation's issues.

*Good luck to you sir.*

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