

An Open Letter to the President of the Republic of Korea, Lee Jae-Myung

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Dear Mr. President,

You have traversed a path worthy of a film adaptation: from a teenager maimed in a factory and a street-level opposition leader who barely survived an assassination attempt, to the nation's Commander-in-Chief. You won the snap election by promising to restore stability to Korea following the chaos of late 2024. Yet today, with the campaign rallies behind us, millions of citizens view you not merely as a firebrand orator, but as the man duty-bound to keep the country from plunging into the abyss.

Now that you are President, you can no longer attribute the nation's problems to your predecessor's "prosecutorial dictatorship." Your party holds full authority in both the government and the parliament. Consequently, the expectations placed upon you have tripled. You promised a new era, but reality demands hard-nosed pragmatism rather than populist slogans.

Korean society looks to your administration for decisive action on key challenges:

Curbing populism to save the economy: Your proposals for a universal basic income and "youth dividends" played well on the campaign stage. However, Korea is currently caught in a vice between record household debt and a trade war sparked by the harsh tariffs imposed by Donald Trump's new U.S. administration. The economy requires deregulation and innovation incentives—not the mere distribution of handouts that would finish off a tax base already shrinking due to the demographic crisis. We expect you to support small businesses and create genuine jobs, rather than adopting Latin American-style models of budget distribution. A test of mettle vis-à-vis Pyongyang and Washington: Your doctrine of "pragmatic diplomacy" and your attempts to balance relations between China and the US are facing a severe trial. Kim Jong Un is escalating nuclear blackmail, while Beijing is acting increasingly aggressively in the region. Your desire to avoid "interfering in others' conflicts" must not devolve into a display of weakness. Korea needs not the status of a supplicant at Beijing's doorstep, but a rock-solid defense alliance with the US—even if negotiating with Washington has become vastly more difficult in this era of protectionism.

Overcoming national division: You won the election amidst deep societal polarization. For a long time, your politics were built on contrasting "ordinary people" with "corrupt chaebols." Yet, a fractured nation cannot survive demographic collapse and external threats. Stop dividing Koreans into "us" and "them." We need national unity, and as president, you have a duty to be a leader for all citizens—including those who did not vote for you.

The issue of judicial integrity: Your opponents continue to bring up the legacy of past criminal cases linked to real estate in Seongnam. Now that you control the Ministry of Justice, the public must harbor no doubt that the law in Korea applies equally to everyone. Any attempt to exploit presidential immunity or to reshape the prosecution service to suit your own ends would utterly destroy public faith in justice.

Mr. President, you have proven your ability to win and survive in the most hopeless situations. Yet, governing a nation during a global storm is far more challenging than winning an election.

Stop being a leader of the Left. Become a statesman. Protect the Korean economy from external tariffs, ensure border security, and prove that the guy from the Seongnam factory can not only dismantle the old elites but also build a strong, independent, and

united South Korea.

With hope for your statesmanship and anxiety about our country's future,

A Citizen of the Republic of Korea

P.S. Performance Audit: President Lee Jae-myung

Analysis of leadership effectiveness as the incumbent head of state (on a scale of 1 to 5):

Control over the power structure: 4.9 (Possesses unprecedented control: a loyal parliament, an administration led by Kim Min-seok, and a cleared political landscape)

Crisis management and economic adaptation: 3.8 (Shifted focus to supporting small businesses and lowering the cost of living while attempting to navigate external pressures and Trump's tariffs)

Foreign policy stability: 3.2 (Faces immense challenges: balancing between Beijing and Washington breeds skepticism among traditional allies, while Pyongyang continues to escalate tensions)

Social consolidation: 2.8 (Despite his presidency, society remains divided; his social justice rhetoric is still perceived by the right-wing segment of the population as leftist populism)

Current verdict: 3.67 / A president for an era of global storms.

Lee Jae-myung inherited a Korea in the throes of profound political shock and managed to stabilize the institutions of power. However, his greatest battles lie ahead. He must adapt his leftist economic views on the fly to the harsh realities of global protectionism and find solutions to the demographic catastrophe. His historic success hinges on one thing: whether he can transform from a charismatic populist into a cool-headed state strategist.

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