

## TAIWAN'S 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: STILL HOPE FOR JAMES SOONG?

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### **Abstract**

A recent report predicted that incumbent President Chen Shui-bian would dominate Taiwan's 2004 presidential election. In the 2000 presidential election, James Soong garnered 36.8 percent of the total votes, while this rival Chen Shui-bian won the presidency with 39.3 percent of the votes. The gap between the two was a mere 2.5 percent, or a disparity of 312,725 popular votes, the most closely fought contest in Taiwan's modern history. Does Soong stand a chance, albeit a minor one, of winning the next election? He faces three roadblocks to his second run at the presidency. Yet, despite these obstacles, Soong remains the candidate posing the greatest threat to incumbent President Chen Shui-bian in the 2004 election. Moreover, no dark horse among the Pan-Blue League can be predicted at the present time.

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### The Next Winner: Chen or Soong?

A recent report in the *Economist* predicted that incumbent President Chen Shui-bian would dominate Taiwan's 2004 presidential election. The report argued that, while the Kuomintang (KMT) had charismatic leaders of its own, "if Mr. (James) Soong were to run against the KMT again in a presidential race, the pro-unification camp would be split and Mr. Chen would again be the likely victor."<sup>1</sup> Is such an analysis tenable? Will Chen be reelected? Does Soong really not stand a chance, albeit a minor one, of winning the next election? The answer is not easy to fathom. However, one may speculate that, while Chen has a good chance of being reelected, Soong stands a very good chance to turn the tables on Chen. Given that two years is a long time in politics, it may be premature for pundits to write off Soong politically.

In the 2000 presidential election, James Soong garnered 36.8 percent of the total votes, while his rival, Chen Shui-bian, won the presidency with 39.3 percent of the votes (see table 1). The gap between the two was a mere 2.5 percent, or a disparity of 312,725 popular votes—the most closely fought contest in Taiwan's modern history. At the subsequent Legislative Election in December 2001, the People First Party (PFP), under the leadership of James Soong, won 46 (or 21 percent) of the legislature's 225 seats. By comparison, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), led by Chen Shui-bian, obtained 87 seats (or 37.8 percent). Aside from winning more seats, the DPP also was ahead in the popular vote: 3,447,740 votes compared to the PFP's 1,917,836 (see table 2).

Polls show that many Taiwanese cannot understand how the DPP could win such a big margin, especially in an election held against a backdrop of economic turmoil. However, most would agree that the period soon after Chen Shui-bian came

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<sup>1</sup> "Taiwan's Kuomintang—On the Brink," *Economist*, December 8, 2001, 33.

**Table 1. Results of Taiwan's 2000 Presidential Election  
(March 18, 2000)**

No.	Name	Party	Sex	Date of Birth	Total Votes	Percentage (%)
1	James Soong	Non-partisan	M	1942	4,664,972	36.8
	Chang Chau-hsiung		M	1942		
2	Lien Chan	KMT	M	1936	2,925,513	23.1
	Vincent Siew		M	1939		
3	Lee Ou	NP	M	1937	16,782	0.1
	Fen Fu-xiang		M	1948		
4	Hsu Sin-liang	Non-partisan	M	1941	79,429	0.6
	Chu Huei-liang		F	1950		
5	Chen Shui-bian	DPP	M	1951	4,977,697	39.3
	Annette Lu		F	1944		

Source: Central Election Commission, Taiwan, Republic of China.

**Table 2. Results of Taiwan's Legislative Election  
(December 1, 2001)**

Party	Total Votes	Percentage (%)
DPP	3,447,740	37.8
KMT	2,949,371	32.4
PFP	1,917,836	21.0
TWN*	801,560	8.8

Source: Central Election Commission, Taiwan, Republic of China.

Note: \*TWN is the Taiwan Union League Party. The parties listed above obtained more than 5 percent of the total votes.

to power in May 2000 was the most tumultuous in Taiwan's history. The domestic political situation became embroiled in many conflicts. The Legislative Yuan (Taiwan's congress) was bogged down with repeated confrontations between the DPP, the minority ruling-party, and the KMT, which controlled the majority of legislative seats. The economy experienced its worst post-World War II recession in this so-called "Party Takes a Turn" era. The island's society was seized by a sense of uncertainty after the defeat of the presidential candidate of

the KMT, which had ruled Taiwan for almost fifty years. Lastly, the deadlock in cross-Strait relations stiffened further after the pro-independence Chen and the DPP came into power.

One could surmise that the DPP's victory was the public's endorsement of a DPP government.<sup>2</sup> Thus, even with the PFP winning twice the number of seats in the Legislative Yuan, compared to those it had won in the previous term, many would rate James Soong's chances of winning the 2004 presidency as slim. This is in view of Chen Shui-bian's satisfactory 45-50 percent performance in the polls (see table 3) since he took office in May 2000.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Chen seems quite re-electable in 2004, so long as he does not make any major mistake during the remainder of his first term.

James Soong faces three roadblocks to his second run at the presidency: 1) he is a mainlander Chinese; 2) the Hsing-Piao scandal may come back to haunt him<sup>4</sup>; and 3) the public associates Soong with the old and outdated KMT. Despite these obstacles, Soong remains the candidate posing the greatest threat to incumbent President Chen Shui-bian in the 2004 election, primarily because: 1) among all the possible candidates, Soong is considered the one who could possibly tie with

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<sup>2</sup> Hu Fu in the Department of Political Science, National Taiwan University, expressed his view in a special report in the *United Daily News*. Hu also believes that the DPP's strategy of appealing to native Taiwanese was instrumental in the DPP's winning the election. See *United Daily News*, December 2, 2001, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Chen's satisfactory rating dropped to 36 percent and 38 percent when he was unable to handle the events of reforming the farmer's banking system in November 2002. The polls' results can be found in the *United Daily News*, November 20, 2002, 2, and November 24, 2002, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Soong allegedly used public funds for private use. This was the main cause of Soong's defeat in the 2000 presidential election. This Hsin-Piao scandal, in addition to the declaration of support for Chen Shui-bian by Nobel laureate and director of Academe Sinica in Taiwan, Lee Yuan-Ze, were the two mortal wounds leading to Soong's defeat.

**Table 3. Chen Shui-bian's Performance between May 20 and December 22, 2001**

Date of Polls	Support Rate (%)	Opposition Rate (%)	Background
<b>2000</b>			
Jun. 18	75	7	A month after his inauguration
Jun. 21	79	6	After first press conference
Jul. 7	68	18	Two months after inauguration
Jul. 24	56	28	The Pa-Zha River incident
Aug. 1	58	23	After second press conference
Aug. 12	60	30	Before the official visit abroad
Aug. 25	64	25	After the official visit abroad
Oct. 3	47	43	
Oct. 4	42	45	Premier Tang Fei's resignation
Oct. 14	46	44	Lee Yuan-ze's criticism of Chen
Oct. 22	45	46	Five months after inauguration
Oct. 27	39	48	Termination of fourth nuclear power plant (NPP)
Oct. 29	40	48	
Nov. 5	47	42	Apology for termination of NPP
Nov. 12	51	37	Meeting of opposition leaders
Nov. 18	46	39	Six months after inauguration
Dec. 28	39	50	Argument over 84 working hours
<b>2001</b>			
Jan. 16	45	45	Seven months after inauguration
Feb. 14	42	43	Resumption of construction of NPP
Mar. 2	40	46	Five months after new cabinet
Mar. 5	42	43	Reshuffling of cabinet
Apr. 8	42	45	Six months after new cabinet
Apr. 19	48	35	Eleven months after inauguration
May 7	43	43	Chen's address to the DPP Convention
May 7	45	46	One-year anniversary after inauguration
Jun. 5	45	38	After visit to Latin America
Jun. 27	47	42	Thirteen months after inauguration
Jul. 22	42	45	Economic Development Conference (EDC)
Aug. 27	45	41	Closed-door meeting of EDC
Oct. 5	48	40	Anniversary of the cabinet
Oct. 31	47	39	Publication of Chen's new book
Nov. 27	51	36	Eve of legislative election
Dec. 2	49	39	After the election
Dec. 22	55	36	Eighteen months after inauguration

**Table 3 (continued)**

Date of Polls	Support Rate (%)	Opposition Rate (%)	Background
<b>2002</b>			
Jan. 18	52	35	Twenty months after inauguration
Feb. 27	61	29	Twenty-one months after inauguration
Mar. 15	56	31	Two years after the election victory
Apr. 28	57	33	Twenty-three months after inauguration
May 11	53	29	The talk in Ta-Tan Islands
May 16	58	33	Two years after inauguration
Jun. 25	54	33	Twenty-five months after inauguration
Jul. 10	52	35	After the official visit to African countries
Jul. 19	51	38	
Jul. 20	52	34	Chen takes the chairmanship in the DPP
Aug. 4	46	43	Chen suggests "one country on each side"
Aug. 16	47	40	Vice President Lu visits Indonesia
Oct. 26	47	40	
Nov. 19	36	50	The event of reforming the farmer's banking system
Nov. 23	38	48	The farmers' protest parade
Dec. 7	39	48	After the mayoral contest in Taipei and Kaohsiung

Source: Centre for Survey, *United Daily News*.

Chen in a one-on-one competition; 2) none of the other candidates has support island-wide that is as strong as Soong's; and 3) Ma Ying-jeou, Soong's closest contender, won his second term as Taipei mayor in December 2002, minimizing the possibility of a three-way fight in the 2004 presidential election. Thus, one can draw the following logical conclusion: Soong will be the best possible challenger to Chen Shui-bian in 2004, because his viability as a strong competitor still exists. Moreover, no dark horse within the Pan-Blue League can be predicted at the present time.

### **Road Blocks to Soong's Bid for the Presidency**

Soong's status as a mainlander Chinese (versus Chen who is considered 100 percent Taiwanese) was an issue during the last presidential campaign. Soong won sixteen of Taiwan's

twenty-five counties and cities, including the largest city, Taipei, and the most populous county, Taipei County. However, he lost to Chen by huge margins in several other counties and cities, such as Tainan City and County, Kaohsiung City and County, and Pingtung County, by more than 500,000 votes (see table 4). This was enough to negate Soong's victory in the other areas.

**Table 4. Performance of Soong and Chen in the 2000 Presidential Election in Southern Taiwan**

Counties and Cities	Chen Shui-bian		James Soong	
	Total Votes	Percentage (%)	Total Votes	Percentage (%)
Tainan County	347,210	53.8	136,217	21.1
Tainan City	191,261	46.0	114,299	27.5
Kaohsiung County	342,553	47.1	206,616	28.4
Kaohsiung City	398,381	45.8	259,023	29.8
Pingtung County	238,572	46.3	131,371	25.5

Source: Central Election Commission, Taiwan, Republic of China.

In southern Taiwan, the DPP's stronghold, the focus invariably has been on whether a candidate is a native Taiwanese. This, in fact, is the most decisive factor for most southern Taiwanese. The die is pretty much cast if a native Taiwanese candidate is pitted against someone who is considered a mainlander. Soong's experience illustrates vividly the difficulty for a mainlander to run a nationwide campaign successfully. Often, the debate centers on who would be most loyal to the island, and not necessarily on policy nor personality. While native Taiwanese are viewed as representing the culture and spirit of this island nation, mainlanders are usually seen as outsiders and more prone to toe a unification line with mainland China.

Since one cannot change one's ethnic origin as defined by birth, the alternative for the inhabitants of Taiwan is to reframe the social understanding and perception of ethnic

identity in Taiwan. Former President Lee Teng-hui, throughout his twelve years in power, painstakingly cultivated a public discourse that was based on his view of "Taiwanization." This indigenization process, should it take strong root, may determine whether Soong will be able to shrug off his "mainlander" label, which commonly implies the likelihood of betrayal of Taiwan. The question remains whether Soong will be able to unpack Lee's long-term efforts of "Taiwanization" and repack them in a way that will improve his odds of winning in such a short time span. Another impediment Soong faces is the Hsing-Piao scandal that, up to now, has not faded from the public's memory. In any future election in which he is a candidate, the event certainly will resurface and, again, be scrutinized closely by the public and the media. According to most opinion polls, it appears that Soong did not come out clean when the scandal first erupted. He failed to seize the earliest opportunity to tell the truth to the public, resulting in a breach of public trust and, according to some, in his significant defeat.

Until now, the case has not been brought before any court, and, of course, Soong is presumed innocent unless proven guilty. Yet, the suspicion about his involvement lingers and likely will surface if he declares his intention to run for the presidency. Without a reasonable explanation, Soong will find it extremely difficult to answer his supporters, let alone face-off with his opponents.

The burden of his identification with the old KMT is the other barrier Soong needs to remove. To be fair, most people say that Soong did a good job as governor of Taiwan Province as a result of his diligence and care for the island's citizens. Still, some consider him to be a representative of the old KMT regime. In fact, he even was accused of being a hypocrite in the last campaign. If he cannot remove this unfavorable impression from the public's mind, he will face an uphill task in the next election.

Soong's sharpest critic, Yang Ching-tse, a newspaper columnist, has this to say about him, which reflects the view of a



certain sector of the populace: "Soong was quick to shift his position in his fight against 'the triads and the wealthy', criticizing the DPP government of being hoodwinked by them." However, Yang points out that Soong was the one who first colluded with these same groups when he was with the KMT.<sup>5</sup> No matter whether one agrees with Yang or not, such viewpoints continue to exist in a significant portion of voters' minds, and will make a potent imprint on the next campaign. If Soong again brushes aside such criticisms, one can assume that he likely will alienate many of the middle-of-the-road voters.

Most people believe what James Soong says, and many are moved by his rhetoric, which a reporter has described as "a sword to the heart."<sup>6</sup> Of course, such rhetoric may influence some voters in the short term. However, in the long run, Soong needs to contemplate how his criticism of other politicians could be a double-edged sword, hurting not only others but also himself.

Other potential obstacles to a presidential race by Soong also cannot be ignored. First, what would happen if the political circumstances were to change? For example, if the PFP and the KMT cannot cooperate well as a result of a strong objection staged by the *ben-tu* (localization) faction within the KMT or the KMT fears being overrun by the PFP, the KMT might decide to nominate its own presidential candidate. Second, what if Ma Ying-jeou, the superstar within the KMT, were called upon by the party to vie for the presidential nomi-

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<sup>5</sup> Columnist Yang Ching-Tse wrote that Soong had strongly criticized the ruling DPP for its poor performance, but that the remarks could have applied equally to Soong when he was with the ruling KMT. Yang pointed out that Soong, when he was associated with Lee Teng-hui and Lien Chan, had nominated someone wealthy and with a triad (Chinese mafia) background to run for speaker in the local congress. *Lee Liberty Newspaper*, April 3, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Soong turned the term "Greening," which is the color of the ruling DPP government, into "Corrupting," to criticize the DPP government. See Dan Wen-Ching, *Taiwan Daily News*, April 2, 2001.

nation in 2004? Would a call by the party prevail over his personal inclination to defer to Soong's seniority?

The final decisive factor is that the DPP is in power and controls the administrative resources, which can come in handy when cultivating support and political networks. This is exactly the area in which Soong performed remarkably well when he served as the provincial governor. Four years, 2000-2004, offer ample time for the DPP to deploy its key personnel in crucial positions, such as in state-owned enterprises, and to cultivate extensive patron-client networks for the 2004 campaign. Without administrative resources to disperse in order to consolidate his networks, Soong appears to face a tough uphill battle. Moreover, as one would expect, the DPP will have its game plan and strategy to counter Soong's rise. Its leaders are unlikely to sit idly on the sideline, witnessing events unfold against them.

### **What Might Help Soong to Win the Presidency?**

Soong was defeated by Chen in 2000 only by a narrow margin of about 310,000 votes. Therefore, one can reasonably conclude that it is not inconceivable that Soong just might beat Chen in the future should he decide to run again. Soong's supporters long have insisted that he would have won the last election if Chen had not used underhanded methods to increase his votes. There were claims that some counterfeit votes were found after election day on March 18, 2000, which favored Chen Shui-bian.<sup>7</sup> Such accusations are common in elections, but even if one were to assume that Chen had cheated, the number of bogus votes that were cast is unlikely to have been large enough to have denied Chen the victory.

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<sup>7</sup> After the presidential election, there were several accusations that, in Tainan City and County, records of counterfeit votes in favor of Chen Shui-bian were found in some polling stations.

However, Soong possibly is the only mainlander who is capable of winning the native Taiwanese support in southern Taiwan. In the past, none of the mainlander candidates has been able to do well in the south. In 2000, Soong beat Lien Chan, who is a native Taiwanese but was born in mainland China, by almost two million votes (see table 1). It was reported that Soong told officials of the American Institute on Taiwan that the “ethnic” factor would fade away in future elections, citing victories by several mainlanders, such as Jason Hu in Taichung City and Chu Li-Lun in Taoyuan County, as examples.<sup>8</sup> Of course, these are not the only cases.

In Taitung County on the east coast, where many native Taiwanese and aborigines live, Hsu Ching Yuan, a mainlander who was a legislator during the campaign for Taitung’s mayor, surprisingly won the post there. One also can take the 2001 city and county mayoral elections as examples. While it is true that most areas were dominated by Taiwanese candidates, one must bear in mind that these areas lack mainlanders running in elections.

The other interesting factor is whether the sense of being “New Taiwanese” will have taken root in the people’s minds by 2004. The term was first used by Soong when he ran for governor of Taiwan Province in 1995, and then was used by Ma in his 1998 Taipei City mayoral race. Both were mainlander candidates who won in competition with Taiwanese. Most observers agree that the “New Taiwanese” slogan decisively affected the results of the elections.<sup>9</sup> Soong, of course, knew the importance of spreading the concept of “New Taiwanese” and improved his results and those of the PFP by

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<sup>8</sup> See *United Daily News*, December 9, 2001, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Several articles can be found in newspapers including, Kuo Cheng-Liang, “Lee Tung-Hui’s ‘New Taiwanese’ May Damage the DPP’s Tone,” *China Times*, December 7, 1999, and Ma Hui-Ming, “‘New Taiwanese’ Is a Benefit to the KMT,” *China Times*, December 3, 2002. A Gallup poll showed that about 46.7 percent of interviewees recognized themselves as New Taiwanese. See *China Times*, December 13, 1999 <<http://forums.chinatimes.com.tw/report/mayor/98121301.htm>>, accessed December 1999.

abandoning the mainlander label and nominating many Taiwanese elites to his party's management levels and to the Legislative Yuan. One must wait and see whether this strategy will work again, but Ma Ying-jeou's overwhelming lead in a 2002 public poll concerning the performance of Taiwanese leaders, even ahead of Chen and Soong, may prove that the people of Taiwan will support the person having the strongest identification with the island and a high level of competence. What ethnic group he is from may be immaterial.<sup>10</sup>

Recent poll results revealed that about 54 percent of Taiwanese would like to see a second "Party Takes a Turn" transition in 2004, following the Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral races. A Soong-Lien ticket or a Lien-Soong ticket surpasses a Chen-Lu ticket in all polls by about 10 to 14 percent. If the contest were between only Ma Ying-jeou and Chen Shiu-bian, the former could defeat the latter with a lead of 28 points, that is, 56 percent vs. 28 percent.<sup>11</sup> However, a poll of December 14, 2001, showed Soong as the leading threat to Ma Ying-jeou, the current mayor of Taipei City, in the 2004 election. Conducted by *Open Weekly*, the poll showed that 23.2 percent of the respondents supported Soong, behind Chen Shui-bian's 39.6 percent, but significantly ahead of Ma Ying-jeou's 17 percent and Lien Chan's 3.5 percent. An earlier poll, conducted by the same magazine on November 1, 2001, showed Soong (29.4 percent) leading Ma Ying-jeou (28.8 percent), in answers to the question, "For whom would the public vote if the presidential election were held tomorrow?"<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Soong not only was ahead of most candidates in the run-up to the presidency, but also regarding the next premiership. Less than a month before the legislative election in December 2001,

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<sup>10</sup> The TVBS poll, conducted April 3-4, 2002, showed that 70 percent of the public was satisfied with Ma's performance, 56 percent with Chen's, and 34 percent with Soong's.

<sup>11</sup> The *United Daily News* poll was conducted on December 7, 2002, soon after the Taipei mayoral race. See *United Daily News*, December 8, 2002, 2.

<sup>12</sup> See *Taiwan Daily News*, December 15, 2001.

there was a poll showing that Soong's rating had soared to 22.4 percent, placing him in contention for the premiership should President Chen form a coalition government after the election. The candidates behind Soong were former KMT premier, Vincent Siew (21.4 percent), and former KMT minister of the economy, Chang Bin-Kun (16.9 percent).<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most favorable factor for Soong in challenging Chen Shui-bian is that no one in the Pan-Blue League is capable of replacing him, at least for now. Lien Chan, chairman of the KMT and *de facto* leader of the Pan-Blue League, has a serious problem with his public image. As mentioned before, Lien consistently has won only single-digit support in many polls since the last presidential election, chalking up his worst performance to date when he received the support of only 3.5 percent of the respondents to the poll of December 14, 2001.<sup>14</sup> Despite attempts to improve his image, it is quite significant that the public's impression of him as old-fashioned and inflexible has not changed. However, it is worth mentioning that both Lien and Soong showed their willingness to work toward a KMT-PFP coalition for the 2004 presidential election in a joint press conference on December 14, 2002.<sup>15</sup> Yet, in an interview by Star TV, Lien indicated that the KMT nominee would be the presidential candidate and the nominee from the PFP, the running mate.<sup>16</sup> Whether the PFP or James Soong will concur with this expectation remains uncertain.

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<sup>13</sup> This survey was conducted by Power TV Polls Centre; see *People's Daily News*, September 12, 2001, 4. Those in favor of Soong as the best candidate for the premiership of a coalition government were discovered in another survey that was conducted by the Centre of Decision Investigation in May 2001. See *ET Today*, May 8, 2001 <<http://www.ettoday.com/2001/05/08/536-452870.htm>>, accessed January 2002. The only exception was in the September poll that was conducted by *Open Weekly*, which showed Siew leading Soong with 20.6 percent against 16.9 percent of the votes. See *ET Today*, September 5, 2001 <<http://www.ettoday.com/2001/09/05/91-571770.htm>>, accessed January 2002.

<sup>14</sup> See note 12.

<sup>15</sup> See *China Times*, December 15, 2002, 1.

<sup>16</sup> The text for Lien's interview can be found in *Central Daily News*, August 13, 2002, 2.

Young stalwarts in the KMT, like Vincent Siew and Chang Bin-kun, are incapable of surpassing Soong either in popularity or stature, but Ma Ying-jeou may be an exception. Ma not only defeated Chen Shui-bian in the 1998 Taipei mayoral contest, but also he has the charisma to attract the public, including young voters.<sup>17</sup> Ma's running for Taipei mayor for a second term no doubt minimized any potential threat to Chen Shui-bian's reelection bid in 2004, and to Soong's candidacy. In fact, Ma has declared that he will consider only finishing his four-year term as mayor, but not an electoral bid for the presidency in 2004.<sup>18</sup>

There are reasons for Ma's decision to forego the 2004 presidential election for another four years as mayor, which include:

1. Ma Ying-jeou has a strong respect for seniority. Both Lien Chan and James Soong previously were Ma's supervisors. When Soong was the secretary general of the KMT, Ma was his deputy. When Lien was premier, Ma was a member of his cabinet as the minister of justice. More importantly, Lien is still the chairman of the KMT.
2. Ma will stand a better chance in 2008 than in 2004, because Chen Shui-bian cannot be reelected according to the Constitution, that is, if Chen is reelected for a second term in 2004. It is likely that, by 2008, none of the present political figures in the DPP will be a match for Ma in terms

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<sup>17</sup> A survey, conducted by the Chinese Cultural Society from December 1 to 15, 2001, declared that Ma had more support among youth (about 26.9 percent) than Soong (16.8 percent). Chen Shui-bian was still the leading figure with 38.1 percent. See *ET Today*, December 16, 2001 <<http://www.ettoday.com/2001/12/16/91-1237268.htm>>, accessed January 2002. There also was a study among students in one hundred universities and colleges in Taiwan, conducted from November 23 to December 6, 2001. The results show that the most popular person in 2001 among college students was Ma Ying-jeou, followed by Lee Teng-hui, then James Soong. The incumbent President Chen Shui-bian was fourth. This survey was conducted by the Association of Business Management in the Republic of China, November 23 to December 8, 2001; see *Central News Agency*, December 9, 2001.

<sup>18</sup> This interview was conducted by Tung Tze-shen. See *United Daily News*, December 24, 2001, 4.

of popularity or reputation. However, if Chen should be defeated by Soong in 2004, both Soong and Ma could work out a compromise in which Soong would hold the presidency for only one term.

3. Ma realizes that Soong still receives very high ratings in the polls. He also knows that this is not the right time for him to be the KMT candidate in the presidential election. Ma's deferment also will create space for Soong to represent the Blue League to challenge Chen.

4. If Ma had lost his reelection campaign in the Taipei mayoral contest, he naturally would have been disqualified from competing against Chen Shui-bian again in 2004. In other words, it definitely would not have been to the KMT's advantage to field him as their candidate or that of the Blue League. Ma could be called upon to accept the challenge in 2004 since he won the mayoral election overwhelmingly; but such a call by the KMT would contradict Ma's promise to serve his full term.

Thus, Soong is the most likely and the strongest challenger to Chen Shui-bian in 2004, because of his own qualities and capabilities, and also because none of the dark horses within the Pan-Blue League is in any position to rise to the occasion. Even if the KMT were to decide to nominate its own presidential candidate to compete as a result of a fallout with the PFP, the candidate would be unlikely to gain public support since the candidate probably would be weak in popularity and not able to fulfill the wishes of the anti-DPP public who seek a decisive battle between the Pan-Blue League and the Pan-Green League in 2004. One might still remember the Taipei mayoral race in 1998 in which the New Party candidate placed third and received very few votes. One also can recall the presidential election in 2000, when Chen Shui-bian's victory was built on the Pan-Blue's split.

### New Challenges to the PFP in 2004

With Soong viewed as the most credible candidate against Chen in 2004, the pressures on the PFP certainly will mount in the run-up to 2004. Two urgent matters that require the PFP's immediate attention are: 1) how is the party going to transform the public's perception that the PFP is merely James Soong's party, and 2) how will the PFP campaign for James Soong in the 2004 presidential election?

Many have considered the PFP to be Soong's personal party since its establishment on March 31, 2000. Such an impression is not unreasonable, given that those who supported the party or became its members all idolized Soong. Over time, it has become apparent that, without James Soong, the PFP's existence, let alone its expansion, is questionable.

Soong has long denied that the PFP is his personal party. Instead, he uses the term "the power of one" to illustrate his relationship with the party, following Sun Yat-sen's use of the concept.<sup>19</sup> Although he visibly tries to keep a discreet distance from the PFP, the impression persists that it is his personal party. However, the decision to elect the chairman of the PFP directly may provide a chance to change the public's long-standing impression.

Another challenge that the PFP faces is the weakness of its organization at both the central and local levels. From its sluggish nomination of candidates and its unattractive campaign slogans, to the half-hearted mobilization of its supporters, the PFP has proved to be a less-than-effective entity in comparison to the DPP or the KMT. Of course these deficiencies have to do with the lack of financial resources, for Soong has not been very successful in his fund-raising efforts during the past

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<sup>19</sup> Soong explained "the power of one" in terms of the relationship between Sun Yat-sen and his KMT party, emphasizing that the KMT did not belong to Sun, personally, just as the PFP does not belong to him. See "Hope for Taiwan and Opportunity for Taiwanese," a pamphlet published by the PFP on March 31, 2001, 5-6.



twenty-two months because of Taiwan's economic recession. However, because the government provides financial assistance to parties with more than 5 percent of the total votes in a legislative election, there is optimism that the PFP will be able to get its house in order before the next election.

Political pundits point out that the PFP needs to reveal the size of its membership. Until now, the party has not made known the number of members it has recruited since it was founded. In Taiwan, the number of party members reflects the strength of the party. The KMT used to boast about its 2.5-million membership, which has dropped to only one million. The ruling DPP proudly declared that it had 350,000 members after it won the presidential election. These figures are useful for both parties, even if there has been no large jump in enrollment for either one. Within the PFP, however, the number of party members still is considered top secret, making the party primary almost an impossible exercise. Most commentators speculate that the PFP must know a party that does not hold a party primary cannot be democratic.

The final challenge to the PFP is how to avoid the path taken by the New Party (NP). The NP gained only one seat in the legislative election of December 2001, missing the 5 percent minimal requirement to qualify for governmental financial assistance. Its failure in the election is attributed to the party's image as a group of mainlanders. In addition, the NP's anti-Lee Teng-hui stance became irrelevant once Lee stepped down from the presidency. The PFP, supported mainly by the middle class, intellectuals, and mainlanders, has been cautious to avoid projecting a promainland impression to the public, although it has not been very successful in doing so. The implication is that it might suffer a similar fate as that of the NP.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See Yang Shao-tung, *China Times*, April 16, 2001, 4.

### What Is the Possibility of Soong's Winning the 2004 Election?

In a poll conducted by the *United Daily News*, 46.9 percent of the respondents were in favor of the integration of the Pan-Blue League.<sup>21</sup> If there were an integrated entity, 36.5 percent of the respondents said they would vote for Soong if he were the candidate of the Pan-Blue League against Chen in 2004. In the same survey, Chen received the support of only 24.4 percent of the respondents, while about 25.5 percent of the survey participants were undecided.

Most supporters of the Pan-Blue League would prefer to see Soong and Lien cooperate, regardless what form such a union might take. For example, some prefer Soong as the presidential candidate of the Pan-Blue League, and the retention of Lien as chairman of the KMT and leader, in name, of the Pan-Blue League. Prior to the December 2001 legislative election, the results of a poll showed that only the combined efforts of Soong and Lien could defeat the Chen Shui-bian/Lee Teng-hui axis. The poll gave the Soong-Lien alliance a 38 percent approval rating over the Chen-Lee League that obtained 32 percent.<sup>22</sup> A poll conducted by the *United Daily News* soon after the Taipei mayoral contest revealed that the Soong-Lien alliance surpassed the Chen-Lu coalition by 45 percent to 31 percent of the respondents' support.<sup>23</sup>

There also is much evidence that suggests a coalition between the KMT and the PFP will be successful. Lin Fong-cheng, the secretary general of the KMT, has denied a rumor that Wang Jin-pyng, the speaker of the Legislative Yuan (and

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<sup>21</sup> The poll was conducted November 19-21, 2001, by the Foundation of Public Investigation in Taiwan and announced to the public by Legislator Feng Fu-Xiaing on December 24, 2001. See *United Daily News*, December 25, 2001, 18.

<sup>22</sup> This survey was conducted by the Centre of Public Investigation, The Research Association of National Policy in Taipei City, July 16-17, 2001. See the report published by the association.

<sup>23</sup> See *United Daily News*, December 8, 2002, 2.

a KMT member) will team up with Ma Ying-jeou on a KMT 2004 presidential ticket. Kao Tien-shen, a pro-DPP commentator, views this potential ticket as the most troublesome to James Soong.<sup>24</sup> According to Legislator Lee Ching-an (who originally was considered the most likely person to be nominated by the PFP to run in the 2002 Taipei mayoral contest, but later expressed her unwillingness to step into the race), the KMT and the PFP would reach a consensus to cooperate with each other in the Kaohsiung City and the Taipei City mayoral elections. In fact, Soong commented in February 2002 that the most important factor toward the enhancement of cooperation between the KMT and the PFP was the right candidate.<sup>25</sup>

Other developments have risen since early 2002. First, KMT chairman, Lien Chan, asserted in August 2002 that there would be only one ticket sponsored by the KMT-PFP coalition for the 2004 presidential election. Two weeks after Lien's talk, the new president of the KMT academy, John C. Kuan (who has been the long-time campaign manager of Lien's various runs for party and public office and an opponent of James Soong), made opening remarks at a gathering, asserting that, in 2004, Lien and Soong must be united in advance of the KMT-PFP coalition.<sup>26</sup>

However, there are some unfavorable judgments concerning a coalition between the KMT and the PFP that have been made by scholars who have considered the 2004 Taiwan presi-

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<sup>24</sup> Kao Tien-shen, "The Ticket of Wang-Ma Forms, the Fear Soong Has," *New Taiwan Magazine*, no. 1320. See <[http://home.pchome.com.tw/net/taiwan/1955/new\\_taiwan/newtaiwan\\_002/newtaiwan\\_002\\_0011.htm](http://home.pchome.com.tw/net/taiwan/1955/new_taiwan/newtaiwan_002/newtaiwan_002_0011.htm)>, accessed October 6, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> For Lin Fong-cheng's words, see *China Times*, April 15, 2002. Lee Ching-an's views can be found at <[ET Today.com](http://ETToday.com)>, December 14, 2001, and February 12, 2002. See <[http://www.cttoday.com/2001/12/14/91\\_1236356.htm](http://www.cttoday.com/2001/12/14/91_1236356.htm)> and <[http://www.cttoday.com/2002/02/20/03\\_1260471.htm](http://www.cttoday.com/2002/02/20/03_1260471.htm)>, accessed April 30, 2002. James Soong made this comment in February 2002, after the election of the speaker of the Legislative Yuan with the cooperation of the PFP and the KMT. See *United Daily News*, February 2, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> For Lien's talk, please see note 16. For Kuan's remark, see the *Central Daily News*, August 29, 2002, 2.

dential election for years. Sheng Tze-jen, an associate professor of Political Science at Su-Chow University, has pointed out that barriers to cooperation between the KMT and the PFP arise mainly from the unwillingness of the parties' middle-level staffs to cooperate. Some tensions concern personal interests, while others result from an underestimation of the good will that is expressed by the parties' leaderships. Many mid-level party functionaries fail to realize the goal of cooperation. More importantly, according to Sheng, the reason for the lack of cooperation comes from a sense among loyal party members that they are protecting their respective party's interests and priorities. Therefore, Sheng does not advocate cooperation between the KMT and the PFP until the two parties make some changes.<sup>27</sup>

This view is shared by Tsao Jun-han, a professor in the Political Science Department at National Taiwan University. Tsao agrees that roadblocks preventing integration of the KMT and the PFP exist because: 1) the two parties cannot avoid competition indefinitely; 2) local supporters of the KMT and PFP find it hard to compromise with each other; 3) a lack of mutual trust always has existed; and 4) there is no mechanism to coordinate the selection of one single candidate to represent the KMT and the PFP in a race against the DPP candidate.<sup>28</sup>

The failure of the KMT and the PFP to integrate in Kaohsiung's mayoral election may, indeed, affect the possibility of a Lien-Soong coalition in 2004.<sup>29</sup> It seems that a coalition

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<sup>27</sup> Sheng Tze-jen, "The Constructive Difficulty and the Solution for the Pan-Blue Integration," September 24, 2002. See <<http://www.twpolitics.com/fire/index.asp>>, accessed October 6, 2002.

<sup>28</sup> Tsao Jun-han, "The Chances and the Challenges to the Coalition of the KMT and the PFP," a research report to the National Policy Foundation, July 31, 2001. See <<http://www.npf.org.tw/PUBLICATION/IA/090/IA-R-090-024.htm>>, accessed October 6, 2002.

<sup>29</sup> There was a meeting in early June 2002 between KMT chairman, Lien Chan, and his PFP counterpart, James Soong, during which the two leaders set a tone of cooperation for the mayoral elections. Both agreed that Taipei's

between the KMT and the PFP is easier said than done. Based on the Pan-Blue League confrontations concerning the 2001 political races in Taiwan's counties and cities and its conflicts during the nomination process for the candidate in Kaohsiung City, Tsao maintains that cooperation between the KMT and the PFP is based on anti-DPP common ground. Furthermore, the two parties may face conflict if discord arises between their respective interests. For example, a sense of cooperation always gives way to one of competition when, in a mayoral race or a presidential election that can have only one winner, a zero-sum game between the two parties becomes inevitable.<sup>30</sup> If there is no alliance formed by the opposition parties or there is no single ticket offered by them, neither Lien nor Soong will have a chance to defeat Chen Shui-bian in the 2004 presidential election.

As mentioned previously, Chen Shui-bian has received high and stable ratings for his performance as president. This provides an advantage to Chen for a second term; but there is no guarantee for the DPP. Consequently, the DPP promotes Ma as its chief competitor in order to downgrade Soong. The motivation behind this strategy is that the DPP understands the 2004 presidential election will not be Ma's main concern. If the DPP can convince the public that Ma is its strongest

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incumbent, Ma Ying-jeou, should represent both parties in the capital, and that, in Kaohsiung, a candidate would be chosen through interparty negotiation. Aside from Chang Chau-hsiung, vice-chairman of the PFP (nominated by his own party) and Huang Jeau-ying (recommended by the KMT), there were two more persons, Shih Ming-te, who is a former DPP chairman, and Chang Po-ya, who is the former minister of interior who had been appointed by Chen Shui-bian. These latter two men were considered later by Lien and Soong as the possible candidate to be chosen through the mechanism of interparty negotiation or the mechanism of opposition coalition negotiation. Owing to the lack of mutual trust, Shih was the first one to refuse to join the mechanism of opposition negotiation, and then Chang Po-ya decided to take the same step on September 11, 2002. In addition, Chang Chau-hsiung withdrew from the contest voluntarily. Consequently, the dream to have only one candidate to represent the opposition coalition against incumbent DPP mayor, Frank Hsieh, vanished.

<sup>30</sup> See note 27.

competitor, there are two potential outcomes: 1) a sense will emerge in the Pan-Blue camp that only Ma can fight Chen, and thus push Soong out of the competition early, or 2) the Pan Blue League will become divided by the impression that Ma has been sacrificed if Soong finally runs for the presidency. Another DPP strategy could be to convince the people of Taipei City that Ma should be retained as mayor until 2006. This would thwart Ma's chance in 2004. A political expert provides such viewpoints in his analysis of the Taipei City mayoral election.<sup>31</sup>

Even if Chen's performance remains satisfactory, there is nothing to rule out the possibility that the tide of public opinion may turn against him when the election nears. This is highly likely if: 1) the worst post-World War II economic recession to hit Taiwan does not turn around; 2) there is a new flare-up across the Taiwan Strait; or 3) the DPP government's political reforms fail. Any of these conditions would provide a golden opportunity to Soong to unseat Chen.

As the incumbent president, Chen faces many challenges. He must maintain stable economic and political development, without making any mistake. One wrong step and the damage would be too large to undo. A lawyer, Chen has shown that he is capable of shifting his position with his so-called flexible approach. In some ways, it is good that Chen is not as obstinate as many pundits consider Lee Teng-hui to be. However, equivocation in his policy potentially may destabilize the island. For example, on August 3, 2002, Chen declared publicly that there was "one country on each side," to define the status quo on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.<sup>32</sup> This was seen as his latest statement in a series of sometimes provoca-

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<sup>31</sup> Chen Lu-huei, "The Strategies Will Be Exercised by the Political Parties in the 2002 Taipei City Mayor Contest." See <[www.twpolitics.com](http://www.twpolitics.com); and <http://216.239.35.100/search?q=cache:3P11zxhCeDwC:www.twpolitics.com/f...4/17/2002>>, accessed April 17, 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Chen's announcement is found in most major Taiwan newspapers of August 4, 2002.

tive, sometimes conciliatory, remarks which could destabilize cross-Strait relations.

Soong's insistence on the stability of cross-Strait relations could earn him wide appeal. So far, the people of Taiwan want Taiwan neither to unite with the People's Republic of China, nor to provoke Beijing by any move toward Taiwan's independence. Maintaining an ambiguous or middle-ground position toward mainland China may be the best option for preserving stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Soong sings a tune similar to Beijing's, which stresses that the relationship across the Strait is one among members of a family. He has argued that the quarrel is not between two separate ethnic groups but about two different institutions. Soong also suggests that the parties of the two sides should maintain mutual respect and return to the 1992 consensus, in which both sides agreed to a one-China principle, but with different interpretations.

Soong also wants to increase trade relations and social interactions with mainland China, and to work toward eventual political integration. However, he has emphasized that the Republic of China, without any doubt, is a sovereign state and that the majority of Taiwanese on the island must decide the final fate of Taiwan.<sup>33</sup> It is worth taking note of the development of the trade relationship between the two sides, especially after both entered the WTO in December 2001. Increased trade surely will affect future cross-Strait relations, and, naturally, the 2004 presidential election.

Even if Soong were to take advantage of any of Chen's mistakes, it could not be considered a setback to Chen's reelected bid. According to the polls, Chen's "one country on each side" remark received broad support among Taiwanese, even after intense criticism and warnings issued by Beijing authorities.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See note 19.

<sup>34</sup> The poll, conducted by *United Daily News* on August 4, 2002, showed that 47 percent of the respondents favored Chen's "one country on each side"

One particular factor looms in the minds of most Taiwanese. Adoption of a favorable policy toward Beijing could raise public suspicion that Taiwan might be sold out. Yet, to unflinchingly maintain a hard-line stance against the mainland could raise public fears of actual military confrontation. Finding an acceptable balance in Taiwan's relations with mainland China may well turn out to be the key that will help Soong win the next election.

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remark, and 33 percent disagreed. See *United Daily News*, August 5, 2002, 2. Another poll conducted by TVBS on the same day showed that 54 percent of the respondents agreed with Chen. See *China Times*, August 5, 2002, 3. In a DPP poll, whose results were announced on August 7, 2002, 63 percent of the respondents backed Chen's view, while 28.3 percent opposed it. See <<http://archive.udn.com/2002/8/8/NEWS/FOCUSNEWS/IMPORTANT/939886.shtml>>.



