**Minicase**

The Prime Minister’s Powerful Better Half

Ho Ching’s power has been recognized by many. As chief executive officer of Temasek Holdings, she ranked number 18 on a list of Asia’s most powerful business- people and number 24 on the *Forbes* list of the world’s most powerful women. How did a shy, Stanford-educated electrical engineer end up with this kind of power? Ho was a government scholar who started off in civil service and ended up working for the Defense Ministry in Singapore. There she met and married Lee Hsien Loong, Singapore’s current prime minister and the son of Lee Kwan Yew—one of modern Singapore’s founding fathers. Ho’s experience, education, and connections led to her appointment as chief executive of Temasek, where she oversees a portfolio worth over $50 billion and influences many of Singapore’s leading companies.

Temasek Holdings was established in 1974 in an attempt by the Singapore govern- ment to drive industrialization. Through Temasek Holdings the Singapore govern- ment took stakes in a wide range of companies, including the city-state’s best-known companies: Singapore Airlines, Singapore Telecommunications, DBS Bank, Nep- tune Orient Lines, and Keppel Corp. The company’s website describes Temasek’s “humble roots during a turbulent and uncertain time” and its commitment “to build- ing a vibrant future [for Singapore] through successful enterprise.” Ho’s appoint- ment to Temasek in May 2002 caused some controversy; as her prime minister husband has a supervisory role over the firm. Ho denies any conflict of interest:

The issue of conflict does not arise because there are no vested interests. Our goal is to do what makes sense for Singapore, I don’t always agree with him (Mr. Lee) and he doesn’t always agree with me. We have a healthy debate on issues.

In her role as CEO, Ho is pushing for a more open policy and an aggressive drive into the Asian market. Under Ho’s leadership Temasek has decided to pub- licly disclose its annual report with details of its performance—details that have formerly remained private and been known only to Temasek executives.

Ho is concentrating on broadening Temasek’s focus beyond Singapore, most recently opening an office in India. At a conference of top Indian companies, Ho appealed to investors to look to India for opportunities for Asian growth:

Since the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the word *Asia* had lost a bit of its sparkle. But that sparkle is beginning to return. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Asia economic miracle referred to East Asia, specifically Japan. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of the four Asian Tigers of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Now is India’s turn to stir, standing at an inflexion point, after 10 years of market liberalisation and corporate restructuring. Since 1997, Singapore’s trade with India grew by 50 percent, or a respectable CAGR of about

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| 7.5 percent. Confidence is brimming in India, and Indian companies began to reach out boldly to the world over the last five years. All these waves of development have shown that Asia, with a combined population of 3 billion, has been resilient. If Asia continues to work hard and work smart, honing her competitive strengths and leveraging on her comple- mentary capabilities across borders, the outlook in the next decade or two looks very promising indeed.   1. We have described *power* as the capacity to cause change and *influence* as the degree of actual change in a target’s behaviors. Ho Ching’s power as a leader has been recognized by many, but would you describe Ho Ching as an influen- tial leader? Why? 2. Based on the excerpt from Ho Ching’s speech, what type of tactics does she use to influence the behavior of others? 3. Ho Ching has been named one of the most powerful leaders in Asia. What are her major sources of power? |  |