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The Internationalization of Singapore's State Enterprise Network: Notes on Singapore's Gambits in the Gulf Region

Caroline Yeoh* and Wilfred How

The Singapore system of state-led, market interventions and its concerted attempts at creating overseas infrastructural-industrial township projects have received its share of controversies. These state-enterprise projects are premised on the exportable state credibility, systemic and operational efficiencies as well as technological competencies of Singapore companies, government-linked or not, to locations where the attributes are less distinct. This paper, as part of our series on this topic, revisits the city-state's determined efforts to encapsulate economic space for Singapore-based firms to expand beyond the region, and tests the efficacy of the "Singapore system" exported to foreign locales. This takes on an "Arabian" flavor as we present evidence of Singapore's government-linked companies in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Our results show that the strategic advantage created in the Singapore-styled projects remains uncertain; as well, we find that socio-political intricacies in the host environments continue to stymie efforts to import competencies and business practices.

JEL Codes: F29, F59, O53

1. Introduction

Alternately lauded and vilified, the city-state Singapore-led internationalization strategem has been the subject of much discussion (Regnier 1993, Singapore Economic Development Board 1995a, 1995b, Huff 1995, Tan 1995, Okposin 1999, Blomqvist 2001). Taking the form