

## The Developmental State Public-Private Relationship: The Case of Rwanda's Embedded Autonomy

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### **Abstract:**

This paper examines the developmental state model in Rwanda, focusing on the concept of "embedded autonomy," where the state maintains a close relationship with the private sector while retaining control over national development goals. Drawing on an extensive case study and mixed-methods approach, the research explores Rwanda's political-economic structure, particularly its reliance on party-affiliated conglomerates such as Crystal Ventures and Horizon Group. These entities, managed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and implementing strategic investments, while allowing the state to balance market liberalization with state-led control. The findings demonstrate that Rwanda exhibits core characteristics of a developmental state, including a dominant political settlement, strong bureaucratic autonomy, and public-private cooperation.

The study challenges assumptions that African states are too prone to elite capture to pursue developmental objectives. It highlights Rwanda's ability to achieve rapid socio-economic growth, akin to East Asian developmental states, despite exhibiting patrimonial tendencies. The paper contributes to the broader debate on the adaptability of developmental state models to African contexts and offers insights for future research on the role of leadership, autonomy, and strategic rent management in fostering state-led development in Africa.

### **Keywords:**

Public-private relationship; developmental state; political economy; governance and leadership; public administration; Africa; Rwanda.