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# **Rethinking the Developmental State Model in an African Context: Rwanda's Embedded Autonomy**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores Rwanda's potential adoption of the developmental state model, focusing on "embedded autonomy" in public-private relations—a hallmark of East Asian governance. Rwanda exhibits key developmental state features: political insulation, state autonomy, and strategic alliances with business elites, facilitating economic transformation. The ruling elite's collaboration with military-linked networks strengthens governance, enabling national development plans. This challenges the notion that the developmental state is exclusive to East Asia. While critics argue state-led development fosters clientelism, Rwanda demonstrates that centrally managed public-private partnerships can drive growth. By "Africanizing" the developmental state concept, Rwanda underscores its adaptability when supported by institutional autonomy and strategic governance. However, the study cautions that Rwanda's unique socio-political conditions may limit the model's replicability across Africa.

**Keywords:** public-private relationship; developmental state; political economy; governance and leadership; public administration; Africa; Rwanda