

Explaining Rwanda's Strategic Position in the Continental System of Africa

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The authors refer to “neoclassical realism and regional integration theory” as dual frameworks. It would improve conceptual clarity to indicate how these theories complement each other rather than simply coexist. For example, explain whether neoclassical realism frames systemic–domestic dynamics, while regional integration provides the functional mechanism.

While the authors provide a comprehensive historical review, much of it (e.g., 16th–20th century European scholarship) seems tangential. The section could be condensed to focus on the African adaptations of dependency theory (Amin, 2010; Giraud, 2020), directly linking them to Rwanda's context.

The discussion of Cardoso and Faletto's reinterpretation of dependency should include a more explicit transition toward how Rwanda's institutional strength challenges peripheral dependency. The link between theory and Rwanda's practical counter-strategies needs strengthening.

The economic indicators (GDP growth, inflation, fiscal balance) are well-presented but need citation of their exact World Bank or IMF datasets. Without a clear source, the quantitative reliability remains uncertain. Please include data years and report identifiers (e.g., “World Bank Country Report 2025”).

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The definition of convergence and divergence, taken from Hafeznia (2006), seems descriptive rather than theoretical. The authors should clarify how this concept advances beyond existing African integration literature or situate it within continental integration debates (e.g., ECOWAS, SADC).

The text notes: “Decision-makers operate with limited information and uncertainty regarding appropriate responses...” This is a critical insight but remains undeveloped. The authors should explicitly connect this to Rwandan leadership behavior—how Kagame’s administration operationalized “bounded rationality” in practice.

The conclusion that Rwanda’s “domestic organization has mediated systemic stimuli positively” would benefit from specifying which institutions (e.g., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RDF, or Rwanda Development Board) exemplify this mediation, thereby grounding theory in empirical evidence.

The historical overview (1900–1967) is exhaustive but could be shortened to allow more analytical focus on Rwanda’s post-2007 integration outcomes. Consider summarizing early institutional history and expanding empirical discussion on Rwanda’s tariff reforms and trade logistics after 2019.

The discussion on Rwanda’s involvement with M23 and other groups is highly sensitive. The reviewer suggests balancing the narrative by referencing both critical and official Rwandan government perspectives to avoid potential bias and strengthen academic neutrality.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.