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Foreign Policy Strategies and Economic Development in Rwanda: Case Study Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

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Abstract
This study examines the contribution of strategic partnerships to Rwanda's economic development. It explores key aspects such as foreign market access, economic indicators, foreign investment, and trade facilitation. The research was conducted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), targeting a population of 50, with a sample size of 44 participants from different management levels. Findings reveal that 54.54% of respondents strongly agree that strategic partnerships enhance foreign market access, while 56.81% believe they contribute to GDP growth, employment, infrastructure, and literacy improvement. Additionally, 61.36% affirm that these partnerships attract foreign investors, and 56.81% acknowledge their role in facilitating trade, fostering bilateral cooperation, and equipping students with relevant skills. The study concludes that strategic partnerships play a vital role in Rwanda's economic growth and recommends strengthening diplomatic efforts, attracting targeted investments, enhancing workforce skills, and improving infrastructure to sustain long-term development. Further research should explore Rwanda's economic diplomacy, regional integration, and policy strategies for inclusive growth.
Keywords: *Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development, Foreign Market Access, Foreign Investment, Trade Facilitation, Bilateral Cooperation, Economic Diplomacy*.

1 Introduction

Strategic partnerships play a crucial role in fostering economic development by enabling trade, investment, technology transfer, and infrastructure enhancement. In a globalized economy, countries strategically leverage alliances to improve competitiveness, strengthen economic resilience, and drive sustainable growth. Rwanda, a rapidly developing nation in East Africa, has effectively utilized strategic partnerships to facilitate economic transformation through foreign direct investment (FDI), regional cooperation, and trade agreements (World Bank, 2021).

Over the past two decades, Rwanda has prioritized economic diplomacy by forging strategic alliances with regional and international stakeholders. These collaborations have significantly contributed to infrastructure development, technological advancements, and sectoral expansion in key areas such as agriculture, energy, and manufacturing (IMF, 2022). Rwanda's participation in initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the East African Community (EAC) has expanded its market access, increased foreign investment, and enhanced economic diversification (UNECA, 2021).

Strategic partnerships have also played a vital role in Rwanda's Vision 2050 and National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), which emphasize private sector-driven growth and innovation-led development (Government of Rwanda, 2020). The Rwandan government has actively engaged international financial institutions, multinational corporations, and development agencies to mobilize resources for major projects in transportation, digital economy, and industrialization. These efforts have significantly improved Rwanda's business environment, positioning the country among Africa's top performers in ease of doing business and economic governance (WEF, 2022).

Despite these achievements, challenges persist in optimizing the benefits of strategic partnerships. Issues such as dependency on foreign investment, trade imbalances, and policy coordination gaps may hinder sustainable economic growth (UNCTAD, 2021). This study examines the impact of strategic partnerships on Rwanda's economic development, assessing their contribution to GDP growth, employment creation, and long-term economic stability. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers to refine strategies that maximize Rwanda's economic potential through effective international collaboration. This paper assessed the contribution of strategic partnership on economic development of Rwanda.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Empirical Review

Strategic partnerships play a vital role in economic development by enabling access to new markets, fostering investment, and facilitating technology transfer. According to Link (2015), strategic alliances help organizations leverage complementary strengths, enhancing economic growth and competitiveness. However, many partnerships fail to reach their full potential due to inadequate coordination and monitoring. Link suggests that successful strategic alliances require equal participation of stakeholders, sufficient time for implementation, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Envall and Hall (2016) explore strategic partnerships in Asia, emphasizing their role in national and regional security and economic development. Their study identifies two main types of strategic partnerships: those based on shared values and interests and those designed to manage differing perspectives. The study highlights the increasing complexity of international partnerships and the evolving nature of security and economic governance frameworks.

Coetzee (2014) advocates for the spatial cross-section partnership model, which promotes structured collaboration across various sectors. This model is designed to address economic, social, and environmental challenges while fostering long-term development. Coetzee emphasizes the mutual benefits of strategic partnerships, which create synergies that drive economic and social progress. Okoth (2010) examines Kenya's foreign policy during the Moi era, focusing on the role of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in promoting poverty reduction and sustainable development. The study finds that EPAs were initially designed to integrate regional economies into global trade but often faced challenges due to inconsistencies in implementation and policy alignment with broader development goals.

Strategic partnerships have also been instrumental in Rwanda's economic growth. The country has leveraged regional and international collaborations to strengthen its economic framework, improve infrastructure, and enhance investment flows (World Bank, 2021). Rwanda's engagement in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the East African Community (EAC) has expanded its trade opportunities, increasing foreign direct investment and promoting economic diversification (UNECA, 2021). These strategic partnerships have contributed significantly to the country's Vision 2050 development agenda (Government of Rwanda, 2020).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Strategic partnerships in economic development can be understood through several key theoretical perspectives. These theories provide a foundation for analyzing the effects of partnerships on Rwanda's economic growth, particularly in terms of financial, technical, and administrative collaboration. The relevant theories include Liberalism Theory, Normative and Positive Theories of Public-Private Partnerships, and Partnerships Theory.

2.2.1 Liberalism Theory

Liberalism emphasizes cooperation and interdependence among states and non-state actors to promote economic development and global stability. According to Burchill et al. (2013), classical liberalism posits that human nature is inherently cooperative, and international collaboration fosters peace and economic progress. This theory suggests that partnerships between the public and private sectors, as well as between nations, enhance economic development by promoting trade, investment, and knowledge transfer. In the Rwandan context, liberalism supports the country's foreign development strategies, which prioritize bilateral and multilateral partnerships to advance economic growth. Rwanda's engagement with international organizations and private investors aligns with the liberalist principle that increased cooperation leads to mutual benefits. This is evident in Rwanda's participation in regional trade agreements, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the East African Community (EAC), which facilitate economic integration and market expansion (UNECA, 2021).

2.2.2 Normative and Positive Theories of Public-Private Partnerships

The normative and positive theories of public-private partnerships (PPPs) analyze the role of public and private entities in economic development. According to David and Jerome (2006), these theories seek to define the optimal division of responsibilities between public institutions and private enterprises to maximize efficiency and social welfare. In Rwanda, PPPs have been instrumental in infrastructure development, healthcare, and technology sectors. The government has leveraged partnerships with multinational corporations, donor agencies, and international financial institutions to drive economic growth. These collaborations have facilitated major projects, such as the Kigali Innovation City and the development of renewable energy initiatives (Government of Rwanda, 2020). By applying the principles of PPP theories, Rwanda continues to enhance service delivery and economic productivity.

2.2.3 Partnerships Theory

The partnerships theory, developed by McQuaid (2000), underscores the importance of structured cooperation between developed and developing economies. It argues that partnerships create synergies where the collective impact exceeds the sum of individual contributions. The theory highlights three key assumptions: (1) partnerships generate greater value than independent efforts, (2) they involve collaborative strategy development and project implementation, and (3) they include social objectives beyond profit maximization (Holland, 1984). This theory is highly relevant to Rwanda's economic strategy, which relies on financial, technical, and administrative partnerships with international donors and private investors. Rwanda's Vision 2050 and National Strategy for Transformation emphasize the role of partnerships in achieving sustainable economic growth (Government of Rwanda, 2020). For example, financial partnerships with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have supported infrastructure expansion and capacity building (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, Martin (2006) highlights that economic development through cooperation is achievable via foreign direct investment (FDI), grants, and technical assistance. Rwanda has successfully attracted FDI through strategic alliances in sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing. These investments have been critical in creating jobs, fostering innovation, and improving Rwanda's global competitiveness. By integrating the principles of these theories, Rwanda's approach to economic development through strategic partnerships remains effective in fostering growth, enhancing governance, and promoting regional integration.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is a graphical representation of three variables: (i) the independent, and dependent

Independent Variables **Dependent Variables**

Strategic Partnership **Economic Development**

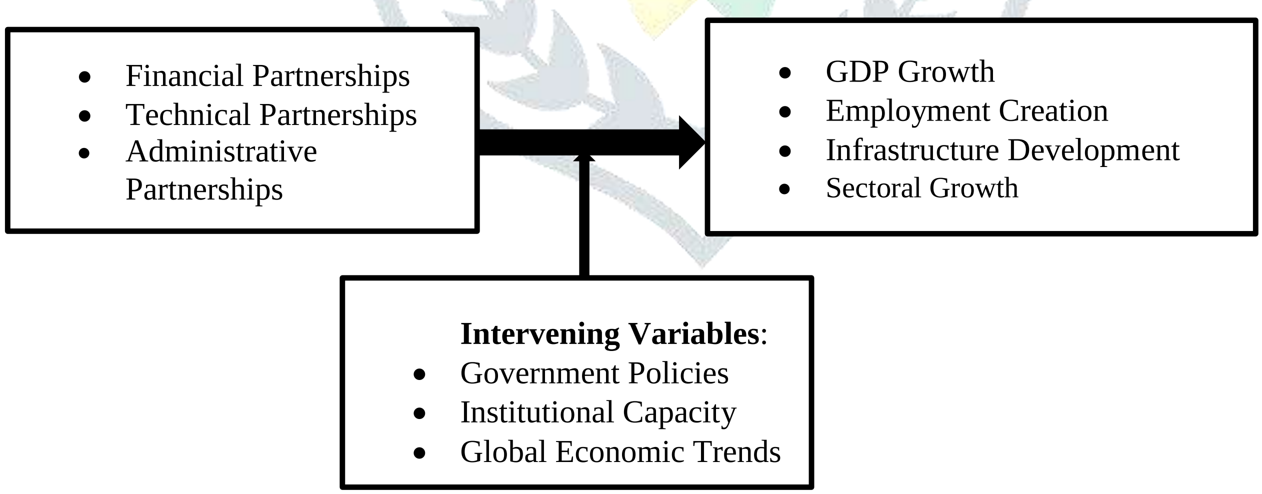

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2025)

This framework provides a structured approach to analyzing the role of partnerships in Rwanda's economic growth, emphasizing the interconnected nature of financial, technical, and administrative collaborations with economic performance indicators.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development in Rwanda. According to Cooper and Schindler (2019), a descriptive design is appropriate for studies that seek to systematically describe phenomena and assess associations between variables. This approach was selected as it provides a detailed analysis of how strategic partnerships influence economic outcomes such as GDP growth, employment creation, and infrastructure development.

3.2 Target Population and Sample

The target population consisted of employees from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), including top management, senior-level staff, and lower-level employees. The study focused on 50 employees engaged in strategic partnerships, ensuring that the respondents had relevant experience and insights into the impact of these collaborations on Rwanda's economic development. The study used Yamane's (1967) formula to determine an appropriate sample size, with a 5% margin of error. The calculated sample size was 44 respondents, proportionally distributed among top management, senior-level staff, and lower-level employees. A stratified sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation across different staff levels, enhancing the study's validity and reliability.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires administered to the selected respondents. The questionnaires consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative insights. Secondary data were gathered from government reports, academic publications, and policy documents related to strategic partnerships and economic development in Rwanda. The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to assess the role of strategic partnerships in economic development. Questionnaires were distributed physically and via email, with follow-ups conducted to maximize response rates. Additionally, document analysis was used to collect secondary data from relevant sources, including reports from the Government of Rwanda and international organizations. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by research experts and pre-tested with a small sample before full deployment. Reliability was assessed using a pilot study, and the instrument was refined based on feedback to improve clarity and consistency. The study adhered to best practices in research design to enhance the credibility of the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, specifically correlation and regression analyses, were employed to assess the relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development.

4 Presentation of Findings

4.1 Strategic Partnership

Th researcher wanted to find out the descriptive statistics on strategic partnership and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics on Strategic Partnership

Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Totals	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	Std-Dev

The bilateral agreement was applied by the Rwandan government as a strategic partnership with friendly states	24	54.54	19	43.18	0	0.00	1	2.27	.67	0.4
The private public partnership was very important and applied by the government of Rwanda to ensure life expectancy, Literacy and levels of employment, Infrastructure	25	56.81	14	31.81	4	9.09	1	2.27	.69	0.2
Attracting foreign investors	27	61.36	14	31.81	0	0.00	3	6.81	.43	0.01
Facilitating trade, promoting Bilateral and multilateral cooperation and equipping students with relevant skills.	25	56.81	12	27.27	4	9.09	3	6.81	3.00	.98

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The study findings highlight the significant role of strategic partnerships in Rwanda's economic development. A majority of respondents (54.54%) strongly agreed that these partnerships enhance access to foreign markets for Rwandan exports, with an additional 43.18% agreeing. This demonstrates that strategic collaborations play a crucial role in facilitating trade expansion and economic diversification. Only one respondent (2.27%) strongly disagreed, indicating minimal opposition to this view. Furthermore, the impact of strategic partnerships on macroeconomic indicators was emphasized, as 56.81% of respondents strongly agreed that such collaborations contribute to GDP growth, life expectancy, literacy, employment levels, and infrastructure development. However, 9.09% disagreed and 2.27% strongly disagreed, suggesting that some respondents may have reservations about the magnitude or distribution of these benefits.

Attracting foreign investment emerged as another critical advantage, with 61.36% of respondents strongly agreeing and 31.81% agreeing that strategic partnerships contribute to investor confidence. This aligns with the findings of Jackson and Osei (2023), who argue that Rwanda's participation in multilateral partnerships has significantly boosted its global competitiveness. Only 6.81% of respondents strongly disagreed, reflecting limited skepticism about this aspect. In terms of trade facilitation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and skill development, 56.81% of respondents strongly agreed on their importance, while 27.27% agreed. Key informant interviews further supported these quantitative findings. One respondent highlighted the government's emphasis on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a core strategy for economic growth, particularly in infrastructure, energy, and agriculture. The role of joint strategic planning retreats with development partners was also emphasized, reflecting. Overall, these findings affirm that strategic partnerships have been instrumental in driving Rwanda's economic development by enhancing trade, investment, infrastructure, and human capital development. The alignment of these results with existing literature further validates the significance of collaborative economic strategies in fostering sustainable growth.

4.2 Level of Rwandan Economic Development

The study sought to determine the level of level of Rwandan economic development as a results of foreign policy strategies using the following aspects; gross domestic product, per capita income and foreign direct investment.

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics on Rwandan Economic Development Constructs

Statements	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Mean**	Std
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**		
GDP growth rates	2.1	2.1	15.0	18.6	62.1	1.84	1.250
GDP per Capita	0.0	10.0	10.7	17.9	61.4	2.05	1.375

Human Capital Index	2.1	2.1	4.3	14.3	77.1	1.42	.968

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The study findings highlight the critical role of strategic partnerships in Rwanda’s economic development. A majority of respondents (62.1%) strongly agreed, and 18.6% agreed that strategic collaborations enhance GDP growth. This aligns with Rwanda's robust economic performance, as evidenced by a 9.7% real GDP increase in the first half of 2024, following an average growth rate of 8.2% in 2022–2023. The results confirm that partnerships play a pivotal role in economic expansion and diversification. Regarding GDP per capita, 61.4% of respondents strongly agreed, and 17.9% agreed that strategic partnerships contribute to improving individual economic well-being. Rwanda's GDP per capita, which currently stands at $1,010.3, reflects these efforts. Human capital development was also strongly endorsed, with 77.1% of respondents strongly agreeing and 14.3% agreeing that the Human Capital Index (HCI) is a relevant indicator. However, Rwanda’s HCI ranking at 160th out of 174 countries underscores the need for continued investment in health and education. While the government has made strides in universal healthcare and education, challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where access to quality services is still limited.

Interview insights further validate these findings. A key informant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation highlighted Rwanda’s intensified focus on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a core economic diplomacy strategy. Under the National Strategy for Transformation 2 (NST2), Rwanda is working to deepen global economic integration and achieve sustainable development. The government's commitment to FDI is seen as a crucial driver of economic growth, diversification, and global competitiveness. Overall, the findings confirm that strategic partnerships contribute significantly to Rwanda’s economic growth by improving GDP, GDP per capita, human capital, and foreign investment. These results align with previous studies and government strategies, reinforcing the view that economic collaboration is key to Rwanda’s sustainable development trajectory.

4.3 Contribution of Strategic Partnership on Economic Development of Rwanda

Table 3 Pearson Correlation between Strategic Partnership on Economic Development

		Economic Development
Strategic Partnership	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	
	N	44
Economic Development	Pearson Correlation	.784**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000
	N	44

Source: Primary Data (2025)

The correlation coefficient and p-value indicate a statistically significant relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development, confirming that such partnerships contribute positively to economic growth. This supports Rwanda’s strategic approach to strengthening diplomatic ties and forging international partnerships to enhance economic development. Strategic partnerships typically involve collaborations between nations, businesses, and international organizations, yielding benefits such as increased trade, investment opportunities, market access, technology transfer, and knowledge exchange. In Rwanda’s case, these partnerships serve as a catalyst for economic expansion by diversifying exports, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and improving infrastructure and human capital. The Rwandan government has actively pursued diplomatic engagement by joining international organizations, participating in multilateral trade agreements, and fostering bilateral relations. These efforts align with the study’s findings, which demonstrate that strategic partnerships significantly impact Rwanda’s economic development.

Table 4 Model Summary

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin Watson
Model	.895	.801	.798	.08543	2.469

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Development
b. Predictors: Strategic partnership
Source: Primary Data (2025)

The regression analysis reveals a strong positive correlation (r = 0.895) between strategic partnerships and economic development, indicating that as Rwanda strengthens its international partnerships, its economic development improves significantly. This high correlation suggests that Rwanda's efforts to expand its diplomatic reach and international presence have been effective in driving economic growth. By fostering strategic partnerships, Rwanda can enhance trade, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), and integrate more deeply into the global economy. These partnerships facilitate technology transfer, market expansion, and knowledge sharing, which are essential for sustainable economic progress.

Table 5 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	355.609	3	71.122	149.196	.000[a]
	Residual	81.992	41	.477		
	Total	437.601	44			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic partnership
Source: Primary Data (2025)

The ANOVA results, with a calculated F-value of 71.122, indicate a strong and statistically significant relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development at a 90% confidence level. The large F-value, paired with a significant p-value (less than 0.10), provides robust evidence supporting the hypothesis that strategic partnerships play a critical role in driving economic development in Rwanda. This outcome further strengthens the argument that increasing the number and quality of international partnerships—such as trade agreements, diplomatic ties, and foreign investments can lead to measurable improvements in economic indicators like GDP growth, export performance, and foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows.

Table 6 Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	sig	95% CI for B	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta			Lb	UB
(Constant)	.138	.037		2.675	.010	.025	. 175
Strategic partnership	.327	.018	.350	17.875	.000	.290	.364

a. Dependent Variable: Economic Development
b. Predictors: Constant, Strategic partnership
Source: Primary Data (2025)

The findings from the study show that the level of economic development is influenced by strategic partnerships, with the regression equation expressed as: Economic Development = 0.138 + (0.327 * Strategic Partnership). This means that for each unit increase in strategic partnerships, economic development is expected to increase by 0.327, indicating a positive relationship between the two variables. The results also provide statistical evidence of this relationship: b = 0.327 (the regression coefficient), indicating the strength of the effect of strategic partnerships on economic development. t = 17.875 (t-statistic), which is large and highly significant, suggesting that the regression coefficient is not zero and that the effect of strategic partnerships on economic development is meaningful. p-value = 0.000, which is well below the common significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the result is statistically significant and that the relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. Furthermore, the 95% Confidence Interval (CI) with an edge of 0.0290 suggests that the true value of the regression coefficient likely falls within this range, providing strong assurance that the relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development is consistent and significant. This means the effect of strategic partnerships on economic development is both statistically significant and reliable.

5.Discussion

The study provides valuable insights into the significant role of strategic partnerships in driving Rwanda's economic development. The descriptive statistics show that strategic partnerships, especially bilateral and public-private partnerships, are essential in expanding Rwanda's access to foreign markets, enhancing foreign investment, and promoting key sectors such as infrastructure, trade, and education. A majority of respondents agreed that these partnerships have contributed positively to the country's macroeconomic indicators, including GDP growth, life expectancy, literacy, employment levels, and infrastructure development. These results align with the African Development Bank (2023), which emphasizes the importance of international collaborations in fostering economic growth across the African continent.

Moreover, the study revealed that strategic partnerships, particularly in attracting foreign investors, have been crucial in boosting Rwanda's global competitiveness. The findings corroborate those of Jackson and Osei (2023), who argue that Rwanda's participation in multilateral partnerships has significantly enhanced its attractiveness as an investment destination. This supports the government's long-standing emphasis on creating a conducive environment for foreign direct investment (FDI), which is vital for economic expansion.

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.784 and the p-value of 0.000 further reinforce the conclusion that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between strategic partnerships and economic development. This suggests that as Rwanda continues to strengthen its diplomatic and economic ties, it will likely experience sustained growth in areas such as trade, infrastructure, and human capital, echoing the findings of previous studies, including those by Wilson and Nshimiyimana (2023), who stress the importance of international cooperation in driving economic success.

The regression analysis also reveals that for every unit increase in strategic partnerships, Rwanda's economic development is expected to rise by 0.327, which aligns with the findings of Abega and Ndagijimana (2022), who assert that strategic alliances and international trade are crucial for national economic growth. This is particularly important for Rwanda, which has been actively seeking to diversify its economy through increased trade and foreign investments, as demonstrated in the National Strategy for Transformation 2 (NST2).

The ANOVA results, with a calculated F-value of 71.122, provide robust statistical evidence supporting the hypothesis that strategic partnerships have a significant impact on Rwanda's economic development. This further underscores the effectiveness of the country's strategy of deepening diplomatic relations, as highlighted by Juma and Ndayisaba (2023), who argue that such collaborations are integral to the economic progress of African nations, including Rwanda.

6 Conclusion

This study underscores the pivotal role that strategic partnerships play in driving Rwanda's economic development. The findings clearly demonstrate that such collaborations, whether in the form of bilateral agreements, public-private partnerships, or multilateral trade relations, have significantly contributed to key macroeconomic indicators such as GDP growth, foreign investment, infrastructure development, and human capital improvement. The positive correlation and strong statistical significance between strategic partnerships and economic development further validate the effectiveness of Rwanda's foreign policy strategies in fostering economic growth and enhancing global competitiveness.

Additionally, the study highlights that foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade facilitation, two critical components of Rwanda's strategic partnerships, are vital for the country's continued economic expansion. These partnerships not only enhance market access but also foster technology transfer and knowledge exchange, which are essential for sustainable growth. Furthermore, the results align with previous research that emphasizes the role of international collaborations in promoting national economic growth, particularly in the context of African countries.

The significant findings of this study suggest that Rwanda should continue to prioritize and strengthen its diplomatic and economic ties with both regional and global partners. By doing so, the country can further enhance its economic prospects, attract more foreign investments, and continue its trajectory of sustainable development. Ultimately, this study reinforces the importance of strategic partnerships as a cornerstone of Rwanda's development agenda and a key factor in its economic success.

5.3 Recommendations to the Study

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made to enhance the impact of strategic partnerships on Rwanda's economic development:

Rwanda should deepen its bilateral and multilateral agreements, especially in trade, infrastructure, and technology transfer, to better integrate into the global economy.

The government should leverage private sector expertise in sectors like infrastructure, agriculture, and energy to address key developmental challenges and sustain long-term growth.

Rwanda should create a favorable investment climate, simplify regulations, and strengthen investment protection laws to boost investor confidence and attract more capital.

Rwanda should improve infrastructure for smoother cross-border trade and negotiate favorable trade agreements within regional groups like EAC and AfCFTA.

Continued investment in education, healthcare, and vocational training will equip the workforce with the skills needed to benefit from global economic opportunities.

The government should establish systems to assess the impact of partnerships and ensure they align with national development goals.

Rwanda should prioritize technology and innovation transfer through international partnerships, particularly in sectors like agriculture, ICT, and manufacturing.

Future research could explore the specific mechanisms through which strategic partnerships influence different sectors of Rwanda's economy, such as agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. Lastly, investigating the long-term socio-economic impacts of strategic partnerships on local communities, especially in rural areas, would help assess the broader effects of such collaborations.

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