PEACE AND SECURITY IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA: A CASE
STUDY OF COMESA
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ABSTRACT
States are increasing their cooperation and collaboration with neighbours in order to better respond to the pressures and opportunities presented by globalization. Therefore, the most important reasons for joining regional groupings have been the hope to address common challenges that face the concerned member states. COMESA and Africa in general have witnessed armed conflicts the majority being civil and ethnic which poses a threat to regional integration. In spite of the existence of an elaborate administrative structure and the various programmes such as trade, climate change, agricultural, natural resources, infrastructure enshrined in the treaty establishing COMESA, peace and security which remains key and fundamental to the integration agenda has been persistently absent and obscure. The question which the study sought to answer was: Has the various COMESA integration programmes facilitated in bringing peace and security in the region? The overall objective of the study was to analyze the relationship between peace and security and regional integration in COMESA. The following were the specific objectives that guided the study: To assess whether regional integration enhances peace and security; to examine the nature of peace and security in COMESA; to analyze challenges and opportunities of regional integration in COMESA. The study therefore, sought to explore whether regional partnerships through the various programmes such trade, climate change, agricultural, natural resources, infrastructure in the common market have helped facilitate this goal and whether the current principles of cooperation between the member states and the regional organization are sufficient for the task at hand as it has been persistently absent and largely ignored. The study was guided by the following hypotheses: There is no relationship between regional integration and peace and security; regional integration has led to peace and security; regional integration has not led to peace and security. The study was based on theory of regionalism and functionalism that views society as a social system of interconnected parts in the same way a body depends on the heart, lungs and brain to work together for the body to survive and explains that societies function properly if they share common goals. The study found that regional integration in COMESA ought to add to peace and security and that peace and security is a key ingredient for successful regional economic integration. The study recognizes that peace and security is the foundation in building a socially and economically strong regional grouping and that peace is a pre-requisite to sustained economic development. The study also found that in a number of integration initiatives like EU and ASEAN, regional security appears as a policy objective of regional economic integration, not just an “outcome”. The study recommended that the various programs in COMESA should be reformulated to include peace and security aspect as a key objective. The study further recommended that future studies be conducted to establish why the various programmes have not achieved their original laid objectives as per the COMESA treaty. The study finally recommended that individual member states should adapt a peace curriculum aimed at building a culture of peace in the region through learning.