Abstract
This study is an exploration of the nature of the interaction between collective identity and regional integration processes in the East African Community (EAC) aimed at illuminating the prospects for political integration. It is premised on the assertion that agents simultaneously inhabit multiple identities whose salience varies according to the context and agrees that approaches that fail to take cognizance of this fact cannot sufficiently explain how collective identity interacts with regional integration processes. The author argues that contrary to commonly advanced positions that a collective civic identity rather than a cultural identity is relevant for political integration, different types of identity categorizations support different aspects of the process. Employing an approach which examines the manifestations of collective identity assignments of the East African Community from norms through discussions and action between states, the author shows that different aspects of the same identity categorization exist and are invoked differently by actors; that some identities support widening but not deepening regional integration and that the EAC assigned collective identity whereas rivaled by rational considerations of a ‘laggard’ state in the discursive sphere is rivaled by its state identity in the active sphere. It is recommended that if the EAC hopes to attain its aspiration of political federation, the Community must deal with the disjointedness of its collective identity both in the normative and active spheres of integration.