Research Paper

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Geopolitical Expounding of Africa's Conflicts since the End of Cold War
(Case Study: The States Located between 0 to 15th Parallel North)*

Meysam Mirzaei Tabar[1], Mohammad Reza Hafeznia[2],

Seyed Yahya Safavi[3], Hadi Azami[4]

1. Assistant Professor of Geopolitics, Center for African Studies, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran (m.mirzaeitabar@modares.ac.ir)
2. Professor of Political Geography, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author) (hafezn_m@modares.ac.ir)
3. Professor of Political Geography, Imam Hussein University, Tehran, Iran (info.iiwfs@gmail.com)
4. Associate Professor of Geography, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran (aazami@um.ac.ir)

Abstract

A conflict can involve anything from a personal disagreement between two people to the emergence of a world war. When a conflict arises, a combination of the main components of geopolitics (geography, politics and power) plays a role in its formation. Thus, the roots of the conflict can be explained in the frame of the principles of geopolitics. Most of the conflicts in Africa occur in 0-15 degrees north. The current study is a work of "basic research". In terms of nature and method, it is "descriptive" and in terms of attitude, it falls in the category of "descriptive-analytic" research. Data gathering was done by a documentary method and through consulting library resources. The data analysis method was qualitative. The research set out to find an answer to the following question: "From a geopolitical point of view, which factors affect interstate and intrastate conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa?" The current study has explained the roots of the conflicts from a geopolitical perspective through studying the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa. This study led to the presentation and introduction of 26 geopolitical root causes for conflicts.

Keywords: Africa, Boundary, Conflict, Ethnicity, Geopolitics, Religion

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1. Introduction

Geopolitics studies the mutual relation between geography, power, politics, and reactions caused by their combination (Hafeznia, 1385 [2006 A.D.], p. 37). In other words, it comprises a domain of political geography addressing the mutual relation between geography and politics in connection with power (Hafeznia & Kaviani Rad, 1393 [2014 A.D.], pp. 153-154). Geopolitical research can yield valuable results on global, regional, national and local scales. Conflict occurs when two individuals, groups of people, or states take certain policies that are against one another (Frankel, 1973, p. 87). Conflict arises from a disagreement on essential interests from micro to macro scales and from personal to state levels, and is developed due to continuation and unsettlement, resulting in causalities and economic damages. In this research, conflict refers to any disagreement with any degree of severity, namely war.

Circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa is the region between the zero-degree (equator) to 15 degrees orbiting the Northern Hemisphere in Africa and includes 29 states as follows: Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Central Africa, Cameroon, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Somalia, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Chad, Senegal, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo, Gabon, Niger and Mali.

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Map 1. Geographic and Political Location of Circle 0 to 15th

Parallel North of Africa

Source: MapSof.net. (n.d.): African Continent Countries Map

20 states from 29 states of circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, including Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal are involved in 38 conflicts as follows:

The Somali National Movement (SNM) conflict and establishment of Somaliland in the north of Somali; the conflict between the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) and the temporary federal state to establish Puntland state in the north of Somalia; the conflict between Puntland and Somaliland in Somalia; the conflicts of Al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI) group in Somalia; the conflicts of Islamic Courts Union (ICU) with the temporary federal state of Somalia; conflicts of the rebel group Harakat al-Shabaab of Somalia; ethnic conflicts in the border areas of Somalia and Kenya; the tribal conflicts in Somalia; the conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti; the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the conflict between Eritrea and Yemen; the conflict between Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the state in Oromo region of Ethiopia; the conflict between the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) and the Ethiopian state; the ethnic and tribal conflicts in Ethiopia; Muslim and Christian conflicts in Ethiopia; the conflict between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan on the Nile river; the Tana Delta conflicts in Kenya; Darfur region conflicts in Sudan; the conflicts between the state of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army of North (SPLM/A-N) before and after the collapse of Sudan; the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan; Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict with the state of Uganda; the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the area of Lake Albert; Seleka and Anti-balaka's conflict in the Central African Republic; the conflict between armed rebel groups with the state in the Central African Republic; the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria; the conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon; the conflicts in Niger Delta in Nigeria; the conflict in Nigeria to gain independence in Biafra region; Muslims and Christians conflicts in Nigeria; the conflict

between Boko Haram and Nigeria state; conflicts of farmers and cowmen in Burkina Faso; the ethnic conflicts in Ghana; the sea borders disputes between the Ivory Coast and Ghana; conflicts in the regions of cacao cultivation in the Ivory Coast; the conflict between Forces Nouvelles (FN) and the state of the Ivory Coast; the ethnic conflicts in the Ivory Coast; the conflicts in N'Zérékoré region of Guinea; the ethnic and tribal conflicts in Guinea-Bissau; the conflicts in the Casamance region of Senegal.

Some studies and research have been done in the background of the present study. In a model, Peter Haggett presents the geographical factors causing tension in relations between countries in the form of a hypothetical landlocked country with no access to open water, called "The Hypothetica". In this model, Haggett mentions twelve geographic factors causing tension in relations between countries (Haggett, 2001, pp. 522-527). Referring to the phrase "Geopolitical Friction" in the book of "Military Geography for Professionals and the Public," John M Collins introduces the five factors of conflict, namely friction over territorial limits, strategic friction, economic friction, cultural friction, and environmental friction (Collins, 1998, pp. 285-301). In his PhD thesis entitled "Finding the Pattern of Tension Based on Geopolitical Resourses in Interstate Relations (Case study: South-west Asia)", Ribaz Ghorbaninejad examines the geopolitical resources of tension between countries in eight groups by updating Peter Haggett's "Hypothetica" model (Ghorbaninejad, 1392 [2013 A.D.], p. 353).

2. Methodology

The research is applied in its goal and intends to investigate

geopolitical causes of the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa. The research is qualitative in its method, and the data gathering procedure is based on library findings. Data analysis is done qualitatively. It involves library research and of the meta-study and Meta Synthesis type. The research intends to find an answer to the following question: "From a geopolitical point of view, which factors affect interstate and intrastate conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa?" The hypothesis is that the geopolitical causes of conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa include territorialization and expansionism of ethnic groups and tribes, followers of religions, the states, colonial actions, state weakness in optimal management of the territory, foreign interventions, environmental degradation, climate change, lack of spatial justice, historical memory, weakness in delimitation and accurate borders marking, and so on.

3. Theoretical Framework (Conflict Views and Theories)

Since the fourth century BC, various views and theories have been presented by philosophers and thinkers specializing in political science, sociology, international relations, geography, political geography, geopolitics, etc., on conflict and its causes. The most central of these postulations include 22 views and theories as presented in the following four thematic groups:

1. **Political Science theories** include the theories of Thomas Hobbes, Kalevi J. Holsti, and the theory of James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff;
2. **Sociological theories** include the theories of Plato, Aristotle, Ibn Khaldun, Karl Marx and Marxism, internal colonialism, Frustration–Aggression, Ralf Dahrendorf, Relative Deprivation, and Peter Meyer;

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3. **International relations theories** include Marxism, Classical Realism, Neo-Realism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism;

4. **Geographical and Geopolitical theories** include the Model of Hypothetica, the theories of Edward Lutwack, the Clash of Civilizations, John M. Collins, Thomas Hammer-Dixon, and Mohammad Reza Hafeznia (Mirzaei Tabar, Hafeznia, Safavi, & Azami, 1396 [2018 A.D.], pp. 138-139).

According to these views and theories, the main causes of conflicts in 10 groups of Individual, Social, Economic and Geo-economics, Cultural and Geocultural, Territorial, Political, Geostrategic, Historical, Geographical and Hydropolitical factors include the elements illustrated in the following table (Mirzaei Tabar et al., 1396 [2018 A.D.], pp. 170-172):

Table 1. Factors influencing the occurrence of conflicts

The main causes of conflicts	Causes of Occurrence
Individual Factors	competing for more profit; Striving for dignity, honor, prestige and fame; man's militant nature; attempting to meet a person's biological and psychological needs; the selfish and power-seeking nature of human beings; and the way actors think about phenomena, especially interests and threats
Social Factors	lack of valuable resources such as power, wealth, and virtue in society; social and class inequalities; fear of insecurity and attempting to overcome this fear; unequal distribution of authority in society; dissatisfaction among groups and nations due to social exclusion; ethnic groups' competition for scarce resources such as wealth, power, and position; fundamental social, ethnic, and class differences; and social inequalities in the sense of ethnic groups' dignity

The main causes of conflicts	Causes of Occurrence
Economic and Geo-economics Factors	economic inequalities; protecting vital economic interests abroad; seasonal movement of herdsmen on both sides of the international border in search of pastures; efforts to achieve rich mineral or fuel reserves; competition for achieving the economic values of geographical locations; competition for energy; competition over regions with hydrocarbon materials; and resource scarcity with increasing domestic demand
Cultural and Geo-cultural Factors	sectarianism, ethnicity, and nationalism of cultures and relationships based on mutual fear of each other; existence of distinct communities with special cultural systems; efforts to preserve ethnic, cultural and religious identities and values; unequal relations between a dominant cultural territory and one or more subordinate cultural territories within a government system; religious biases and prejudices in ethnic groups against each other; residence of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups along both sides of the border in neighboring countries; residence of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups on both sides of the border without the support of a homogeneous state; cultural and identity conflicts within the country; existence of different ethnic, tribal and religious minorities with separatist tendencies within the country; presence of a cultural resource such as holy places in one country and claim of ownership by other countries; and a lack of attention to the cultural characteristics of the inhabitants in determining the borders between regions
Territorial Factors	territorial disputes and attempts to dominate territories; preventing national collapse or loss of country lands; and a country's claim to a part of a neighboring land to maintain its superior position and border resources
Political Factors	disputes related to the composition of states; disputes over the defense of national honor and dignity; liberation or revolutionary wars; disputes over the action of a government for the unification of a divided country; security enhancement; weakening a foreign enemy; distribution of a political ideology; preservation or promotion of family interests; and existing chaos in the structure of the international system

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The main causes of conflicts	Causes of Occurrence
Geostrategic Factors	having a strategic natural resource and other countries' claiming its ownership; having a strategic position; and locating the capital city or a large city along the border
Historical Factors	seeking revenge on those states that have done harm in the past; defending national honor; and retaliating for a heavy historical insult
Geographical Factors	attempts for dominating the maritime communication route by landlocked countries and developing artificial methods for precipitating transient clouds
Hydro-political Factors	supporting the principle of the freedom of the seas; landlockedness and lack of access to open waters; disagreements between countries over the exact location and interpretation of the water dividing line on mountainous borders despite the delimitation of the international dividing line; selection of a river as an international boundary and exact marking of its borderline with the occurrence of tension due to permanent changes in downstream route; changes in the width of the river and dividing it into several branches; determining the exact boundaries of a shared lake or waterway and disputes over the exploitation of its resources; the dispute between the two countries upstream and downstream over the amount of water consumed; straight line of water and source of rivers; and ways for exploiting the resources of the common maritime boundary

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on different views and theories about conflicts, as well as the study of 40 conflicts in the countries located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa in three categories of ethnic and tribal conflicts, interfaith and religious conflicts, and boundary and territorial conflicts, the most important geopolitical causes of these conflicts are presented as follows:

4. 1. Colonial Actions to Create Imposed Borders (Nation and State Building)

In Ethiopia, one of the causes of the conflict between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the state pertains to the colonial competition between Britain and France for gaining power over Ethiopia and the region of Ogaden and gerrymandering boundary delimitation (Notholt, 2009, pp. 2.22-2.23). In the conflicts of ARDUF and the Ethiopian state, division of the Afar ethnic group between Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti by the "Colonial Geopolitical Architecture" of France and Italy has paved the way for the conflict (Yasin, 2008, p. 43). In the east of Ethiopia, the division of the region between Ethiopia, France, Britain, and Italy, and delimitation of imposed borders have resulted in the conflicts among Garre, Gabbra, Borana, and Issa tribes (Adegehe, 2009, pp. 183-194).

Ethnic tensions of Ghana pertains to the change in the administrative borders of the regions and colonial territorialization without considering ethnic characteristics (Berry, 1995, p. 79; Mbowura, 2014, p. 110). In the north of Somalia, conflicts over establishing Somaliland and Puntland have been the result of biased and vague delimitation of borders by colonials. One of the roots of the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland pertains to the colonial decisions (Hoehne, 2015, p. 14, 36).

One of the causes of conflicts in the Casamance region of Senegal is the delimitation of borders by Britain's colonial forces and ethnic division of the region through establishing Gambia, which has divided Senegal into two unequal parts (Fall, 2010, p. 31; Zartman, 2017, p. 1). Also, one of the causes of conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea is ambiguity in border agreements signed in the era of Italy's colonial empire. This ambiguity resulted

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in the disagreements on the accurate location of the border and disputes about Badme city (International Crisis Group, 2003, pp. 2-3).

One of the causes of Ethiopia's dispute with Egypt and Sudan over Nile River pertains to Britain's agreements with Ethiopia and Sudan, which paved the way for conflict (Nunzio, 2013, p. 8). The main cause of the conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti over Ras Doumeira was European powers' interventions in imposing borders in Horn of Africa (Wolfinbarger, Drake, & Ashcroft, 2015, p. 2). Likewise, a cause of the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over Bakassi pertains to Britain and Germany's agreement in which the peninsula were transitioned from Nigeria to Cameroon (Tarlebbea & Baroni, 2010, p. 199).

The main conflict between the Ivory Coast and Ghana in the Atlas Ocean has its roots in the colonial policies in the delimitation of international borders of the West African states (Bening, 2014, pp. 82-83). The conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon over Mbanie, Cocotiers, and Congas in the Gulf of Guinea pertains to Spain and France's agreement on the delimitation of West African borders that excludes the three islands (Yoon, 2009, pp. 11-13). In the conflict of Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo, some of the causes of the conflict over Roko Vanzi go back to Uganda's claim on the island and the decisions made in the colonial era (Westerkamp & Houdret, 2010, p. 11).

4. 2. Territorialization and Expansionism of Ethnic Groups and Tribes and Competition over Lands and Water Resources

In the eastern, western, southern, southwestern, and southeastern regions of Ethiopia the main conflicts are over territorialization and

expansionism and the competition between ethnic groups and tribes to protect vital resources such as water, land, pastures, and gold (Adegehe, 2009, p. 181; Berhe & Adaye, 2007, p. 9; Richards & Bekele, 2011, pp. 27-33; Gebre, Hadgu, & Ambaye, 2005, pp. 17-20; Stark, Terasawa, & Ejigu, 2011, pp. 2-3). Competition over water, pastures, and fertile lands is one of the causes of the conflict in Darfur (Gebrewold-Tochalo, 2009, p. 160; Akasha, 2014, pp. 55-56).

Territorialization and conflict over land as well as the share of natives in oil incomes constitute one of the causes of dispute between ethnic groups and oil companies, as well as the ethnic conflicts in the Niger Delta in Nigeria (Osuigwe, 2010, pp. 82, 97-98). The conflict between the ethnic groups in the north, northeast, and south of Ghana pertains to the territorialization, expansionism, and competition over land and water (Yelyang, 2016, p. 90; Berry, 1995, p. 79; Patel, Rogan, Cuba, & Bebbington, 2016, p. 454).

In the cacao farms in the Ivory Coast, conflicts have occurred between the state and Forces Nouvelles due to competition over land and natural resources such as gold and diamond (Alao, 2011, p. 53; Guesnet, Müller, & Schure, 2009, p. 60; Quitzow, 2008, p. 34). Likewise, in Guinea Bissau, different farmer and cowmen groups have come into conflict over wealth and scarce productive resources (Voz di Paz & Interpeace, 2010, p. 72).

Some of the causes of conflict in Somalia in the area of Somaliland and Puntland emanate from territorialization, expansionism, and competition over land and water (Hoehne, 2015, pp. 152-153; Osman, 2007, p. 120). In the Tana Delta, ethnic and tribal groups have come into conflict over land, pastures, scarce resources, and water (Martin, 2012, p. 184). One of the causes of

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instability in the border areas of Somalia and Kenya is dispute over natural resources such as water, land, and pastures (Menkhaus, 2005a, p. 4, 43; Menkhaus, 2008, p. 25).

4. 3. Protection of Ethnic Identities and Tribal Values

In Ethiopia, one of the causes of the conflict between different cowmen and farmers groups, as well as the conflict between OLF and the state is to protect identities and confront the fading of ethnic and tribal values, in particular the values held by Afar ethnic groups (Richards & Bekele, 2011, p. 27, 31; Hassen, 2009, p. 32).

One of the causes of the conflict in South Kordofan of Sudan is the protests of Nuba people against the state policies in order to change the demographic texture and to diminish their cultural and identity values through the promotion of Islamic and Pan-Arabist ideas in the region (Gebrewold-Tochalo, 2009, p. 156).

In the separatist movements of MASSOB against the state in Nigeria, Igbo people have recognized the Biafra region as their homeland and as an essential part of their identity, claiming their political and territorial independence (Oloyede, 2009, pp. 19-20). Also, in the N'Zérékoré region in Guinea, the conflict between Konianke and Guerze ethnic groups is an identity conflict over claiming their land rights (Médam & Abouya, 2013, p. 13).

One of the causes of the conflict over the division of Northern Somalia and its tribal conflicts, and the tribes' prejudice against identity values emanate from the fact that the tribes do not accept other tribes' identities (Hoehne, 2015, pp. 22-23; Osman, 2007, p. 120). One of the causes of the conflict in Senegal and the

separatist movement of Casamance people involves the imposing nation building policies by the state, the sense of identity differences between the people of this region and their tendency to protect their identity (Fall, 2010, pp. 9-10; Zartman, 2017, pp. 9-10).

4. 4. Ethnic Discrimination Policies by the States and Ignoring Ethnicities' Rights

One of the causes of the conflict between ARDUF and OLF with the state in Ethiopia and one of the causes of ethnic conflicts is the marginalization by Afar and Oromo ethnicities, state discrimination, and struggle for political independence and their rights (Berhe & Adaye, 2007, p. 2; Beyene, 2011, p. 45; Hassen, 2009, p. 32).

In Darfur of Sudan, delimitation of administrative borders of the region by the state and its division into three regions was a triumph to destabilize the Fur tribe in the region and to nullify the opposing groups' actions which resulted in the conflict (Barltrop, 2011, p. 31).

One of the causes of the conflict in the South African Republic between rebel groups and the state is the presidents' biases toward their ethnicity at the expense of other ethnicities and ethnic discrimination. Presidents Kolingba (1981-1993), Patasse (1993-2003) and Bozizie were majorly concerned with promoting their own ethnicities, namely Yakoma, Sara-Kaba and Jibaya ethnicities, respectively (Siradag, 2016, p. 88).

One of the causes of separatism in the Biafra region is marginalization of the Igbo people and a sense of discrimination

towards the state (Oronsaye & Igbafe, 2012, p. 99). One of the causes of the claim to independence in Somaliland has been 10 years of suppression of the Issaq Tribe by Siad Barre administration (Hoehne, 2015, p. 41). One of the causes of the conflict in Casamance of Senegal has been the exclusion of Diola ethnic minorities by the state (Fall, 2010, p. 12).

4. 5. Competition of Ethnicities to Take Power and Claim to Authoritative Roles and Administration of the State

In the zones of Shinile and Afder in the Somali region of Ethiopia, some of the causes of conflict have their roots in the ethnic and tribal conflict over political opportunism, competition over taking power, and exploiting ethnic differences (Richards & Bekele, 2011, pp. 29-32).

In the ethnic conflicts of Delta Niger in Nigeria, the main conflict is competition for taking office, as well as gaining political superiority and dominance over the territory and natural resources (Osuigwe, 2010, p. 96). Ethnicities and tribes in Guinea Bissau vie for power and dominance over scarce natural resources (Voz di Paz & Interpeace, 2010, p. 72).

In the north of Ghana, ethnic groups have come into conflict over taking power in their claims for power distribution on national and local levels (Mbowura, 2014, p. 108). One of the causes of the conflict in Casamance of Senegal pertains to appointing non-natives in the administrative centers of the region as the locals claim their share in power (Fall, 2010, p. 11).

4. 6. State Weakness in Optimal Management of the Territory and Lack of Spatial Justice

In the southeast and southwest of Ethiopia, one of the causes of ethnic and tribal conflict pertains to the state weakness in proper management of the affairs, codifying destructive policies, as well as the underdevelopment and lack of spatial justice in territory (Gebre et al., 2005, p. 20; Alemu, 2013, p. 118).

In Darfur and the east of Sudan, one of the causes of conflict is inequality in development and lack of attention to people's welfare (Barltrop, 2011, p. 15; Young, 2007, pp. 21, 44). In the Central African Republic, the root cause of the conflict between the state and rebel groups has been the state weakness and managerial authority (Herbert, Dukham, & Debos, 2013, p. 7; Siradag, 2016, p. 89, 93).

One of the causes of the conflict in the Niger Delta is the state's failure to fairly distribute oil incomes in the oil-rich region as well as the marginalization of the natives (Osuigwe, 2010, p. 82). Unfair distribution of social and economic opportunities by the state accounts for one of the causes of ethnic conflict in Ghana (Berry, 1995, p. 79).

One of the causes of ethnic conflict in Guiana Bissau, especially among natives and immigrants, pertains to the state policies in land and resource management (World Bank, 2006, p. 17). One of the causes of conflict in Somalia involving the division of the North and the establishment of Somaliland and Puntland, ethnic and tribal conflicts, and Somaliland and Puntland conflicts, pertains to the state's weakness and failure (Hoehne, 2015, p. 15; World Bank, 2005, p. 16). One of the causes of separatism in Casamance of Senegal pertains to the sense of marginalization by natives due to state policies (Zartman, 2017, p. 2, 9, 30; Fall, 2010, p. 12).

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4. 7. Climate situation and Climate change

In the southwest, east and south of Ethiopia, climate change by increase in the temperature, decrease in precipitation, as well as drought and water scarcity, has led to ethnic and tribal conflicts (Gebre et al., 2005, p. 22; Stark et al., 2011, pp. 3-4). One of the causes of the conflict in Darfur of Sudan pertains to climate change and competition among cowmen and farmers ethnicities over access to water and lands (Akasha, 2014, p. 10, 13).

In the north of Nigeria, deforestation due to climate change is one of the causes of conflicts between cowmen and farmers (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014, p. 78 in Ayih, 2003, p. 15). In Guinea Bissau, deforestation caused by climate change and threats posed on rural agriculture has been one of the causes of ethnic and tribal conflicts (Voz di Paz & Interpeace, 2010, p. 8).

In Burkina Faso (Snorek, Stark, & Terasawa, 2014, p. 21) and north of Ghana, climate changes have been one of the factors resulting in conflict among cowmen and farmers (Olaniyan, Francis, & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015, p. 54). One of the causes of the conflict between Egypt and Sudan over the Nile River and the construction of Renaissance Dam pertains to the climate change and forecasts about a decrease in river discharge in the future (Keith, Epp, Houghton, Lee, & Mayville, 2014, pp. 15-16). Climate change and forecasts about a decrease in vital resources have been one of the causes of ethnic and tribal conflict in the border areas of Somalia and Kenya (Menkhaus, 2005a, p. 4).

4. 8. Environmental Degradation

In Darfur and the east of Sudan, environmental degradation, as well as the decrease in vital resources such as water and soil, are some

of the causes of ethnic and tribal conflict (Akasha, 2014, p. 55; Barltrop, 2011, p. 31; Pantuliano, 2005, p. 21). One of the causes of the conflict between natives and oil companies in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is environmental degradation caused by oil companies' activities (Osuigwe, 2010, p. 82).

Immigrants' activities regarding converting forests to cacao farms along with forest degradation has been one of the causes of the conflict in Ghana (Amanor, 2005. P. 107). Environmental problems caused by the activities of gold extracting companies account for one of the causes of the conflict between these companies and the native population (Thompson, 2015, p. 106; Adonteng-Kissi, 2015, p. 76).

Some of the causes of the conflict among farmers and cowmen in Guinea pertain to deforestation and environmental degradation (United States Agency for International Development, 2010, p. 3). One of the causes of the tribal conflict in Somalia pertains to environmental degradation and its consequences (Mbugua, 2013, p. 13). Also, some of the causes of the conflict in the north of Rift and the northeast of Kenya pertain to the soil erosion and environmental degradation (Kumssa, Jones, & Williams, 2009, p. 1011).

4. 9. Neighboring States' Interventions in the Internal Affairs of the Neighbors

The role of intervention variant in the conflicts of circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa is applicable to ethnic and tribal conflicts in Ethiopia, the Somali Region, and the ONLF conflict with the state (International Crisis Group, 2013, p. 10), Kenyan intervention in Somalia and supporting the Jubaland region (Tadesse Demissie,

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2021) and Uganda's covert role in supporting the 23 March Movement (M23) insurgents in North Kivu Province of the DRC for strategic, economic and political purposes (Deutsche Welle, 2013, Jan. 4). In each of them geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, and geopolitical challenge play a role with the interventions of Eritrea, Kenya, and Uganda that supports ethnic groups opposing the neighboring states in line with territorialization and expansionism.

4. 10. Being Affected by Regional Geopolitical Evolutions

One of the causes of the conflict in Senegal and Casamance region separatists pertains to the geopolitical evolutions of the neighboring states, namely Guinea Bissau and Gambia as they affect Casamance people (Fall, 2010, p. 15). In the Central African Republic, some of the causes of the conflict between the state and rebel groups pertain to the regional unsettlements and in particular Chad instabilities (Herbert et al., 2013, p. 8).

4. 11. The Role of the State's Special Policies

The establishment of the federal system in Ethiopia and land use organization cooperatively account for one of the causes of ethnic conflict in different regions (Kenaw, 2013, pp. 55-61). One of the causes of conflict in cacao farms in the Ivory Coast pertains to the state policies which prompt immigrants to immigrate to this region and the plan of land possession (Woods, 2003. pp. 642-646; Chauveau, 2000, p. 99). One of the causes of the conflict among farmers and cowmen in the Tana Delta in Kenya pertains to the "land adjudication program" and the delimitation of new borders (Martin, 2012, p. 184).

4. 12. Religion Followers' Territorialization and Expansionism and Their Endeavor to Establish Religion-Based State and Religious Governments

One of the causes of the conflict between Muslim and Christian groups in Ethiopia pertains to the endeavor to expand and protect holy places by Muslims and Christians (Abbink, 2011, p. 253, 270).

The AIAI group in Somalia and the Horn of Africa announced their goal to be the establishment of an Islamic state in Somalia and the adjunction of the Somali regions of Ethiopia and Ogaden to the state (Shinn, 2005, p. 101). This group sought to integration all Muslim groups' settled in the Horn of Africa and the formation of an Islamic state (Menkhaus, 2005b, p. 35). One of the causes of the conflict between the Al-Shabaab group and the state is Al-Shabaab's goal to establish an Islamic state not only in Somalia but also in the Somali settled regions of the Horn of Africa (Rudincová, 2011, p. 276). ICU in Somalia defines its goal to be the establishment of an Islamic state in the short term and the foundation of a greater Islamic state in the east of Africa in the long term (Abbink, 2009, pp. 101-102).

One of the causes of Sudan's collapse was the establishment of a democratic and independent "New Sudan" (Berry, 2015, p. 263) in a region where the majority of people were not Muslim. One of the causes of Boko Haram's conflict in Nigeria is its goal to make the Nigerian state an Islamic state (Adewunmi Falode, 2016, p. 43) with Wahhabi doctrines.

In the Ivory Coast in general and in the west and east of the state, some of the causes of conflict pertain to the ethnic and regional groups' disputes over holy places (Quitzow, 2008, p. 34). One of the causes of LRA's formation and its conflicts pertains to

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its goal to establish a Christian state and country (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2014, p. 75).

4. 13. Protection of Religious Identity and Values

One of the causes of the conflict between Muslims and Christens in Ethiopia is that the religious values as well as the identities of the followers of these religions are put in question by their opponents as Muslims and Christians strive to protect this identities (Abbink, 2011, pp. 266-272). Identity differences among northern and southern people are one of the causes of the conflict between SPLM/A and the central state in Sudan (Oppong, 2010, p. 9, 12, 45).

4. 14. Colonial Policies Related to Religion Followers

In the Central African Republic, one of the causes of the conflict between Muslim Seleka and Christian Anti-balaka has roots in the colonial policies to support Muslim cowmen ethnicity of Fulani and this group is accused to seize the lands of other ethnicities, which caused to form negative images form Muslims (Deiros, 2014, pp. 4-5).

One of the causes of Sudan's collapse pertains to the colonial policies regarding imposing borders and marginalizing the non-Muslim people of the south and the sovereignty of Arab Muslims (Essien & Falola, 2009, pp. 5-12). One of the causes of the inter-religion conflict in Nigeria pertains to Britain's misuse of Islamic doctrines within the frame of colonial politics (Jacob & Saad, 2011, p. 32).

One of the causes of the conflict of ICU and Al-shabaab groups

pertains to these groups' goal of protecting the Muslim ethnicity of Somali following its division into different states by colonial powers. In the period 1875-85, the ancestral lands of the Muslim Somali people became divided between four non-Muslim imperial powers: Britain, Ethiopia, France and Italy (Muir, 1997, p. 200). One of the causes of the conflicts of LRA in Uganda has roots in Britain's policies, which marginalize the northern peoples of the country (Le Sage, 2011, p. 2).

4. 15. State Policies Violating Religious Rights of Citizens

In the east of Sudan, some of the Sufi Muslims are aware of the state's violation of their rights (Young, 2007: 20). In the conflict resulting in the collapse of the state, codification of a constitution based on Islamic Sharia was one of the causes of the separatist movements in the south (Essien & Falola, 2009, p. 11, 42). In the Muslims and Christians' conflict in Nigeria, Christians mostly settled in the south were unsatisfied with imposing the Islamic Sharia and the political dominance of Muslims settled in the north (Jacob & Saad, 2011, p. 31).

4. 16. Lack of Spatial Justice for Citizens and Followers of Religions

In the north of the Central African Republic where the majority of people are Muslim, one of the causes of the conflict in Seleka against the state and Anti-balaka is the marginalization of this region (Siradag, 2016, pp. 88-89; Deiros, 2014, p. 5). Some of the causes of the conflict between the Muslims settled in the north and the Christians settled in the south of Sudan pertains to the imbalanced development of the two regions and the exclusion of

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non-Muslims by the state (Barltrop, 2011, p. 15; Essien & Falola, 2009, p. 42).

One of the causes of the conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram pertains to the imbalanced development in the country and the exclusion of some people from different facilities (Azunna, 2015, p. 51). One of the causes of the conflict between LRA whose members are majorly from Akoli and Uganda state pertains to the marginalization of this ethnicity and their economic exclusion by the state (Jackson, 2010, p. 17).

4. 17. Lack of or Weakness in Participation of Religious Minority Groups in the Power Structure and Administration of the State

One of the causes of the conflict between Muslim Seleka and Christian Anti-balaka in the Central African Republic is the endeavor to take office and drive out the state control from Seleka (Siradag, 2016, p. 90). One of the causes of the conflict between north and south to divide the state in Sudan pertains to the exclusion of the non-Muslims settled in the south from state positions and a lack of participation in the governmental administration of Sudan (Essien & Falola, 2009, p. 42).

In Nigeria, one of the causes of the inter-religion conflict between Muslims and Christians pertains to the competition between Muslim Husa-Fulani people settled in the north and Christian Yurba people settled in the north to take political power (Ebegbulem, 2011, p. 83). In Uganda, one of the causes of the conflict between LRA and the state pertains to Akoli ethnic group's lack of participation or limited participation in political and administrative affairs (Le Sage, 2011, p. 2; Jackson, 2010, p. 19).

4. 18. Foreign Interventions and Some States Supports from Religious Groups

One of the causes of the Muslims and Christens' conflict in Ethiopia (Erlich, 2006, pp. 4-5), AIAI in Horn of Africa (Menkhaus, 2005b, p. 35), Muslim and Christian ethnic groups (Nwankwo, 2015, p. 298) and Boko Haram in Nigeria (Adewunmi, 2016, p. 43) and the Al-Shabaab conflict in Somalia (Agbiboa, 2014, p. 27) pertains to the Saudi Arabia's intervention and its role in the promotion of Wahhabism. The country's actions can be explained in the frame of expansionism, geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, geopolitical challenge, and geopolitical dependency.

One of the causes of the conflict between SPLM/A and the state to gain independence from the South pertains to the support received by Uganda from this group (Berry, 2015, p. 284), which can be explained in terms of expansionism, territorialization, geopolitical code, and geopolitical challenge. One of the causes of the conflict between ICU of Somalia and Ethiopian Christians pertains to the support received by Eritrea from this group (Eichstaedt, 2010, p. 46), which can be explained in terms of expansionism, territorialization, geopolitical code, and geopolitical challenge. One of the causes of the conflict between LRA and the state pertains to the support received by Sudan (Berry, 2015, p. 284), which can be explained in terms of expansionism, territorialization, geopolitical code, and geopolitical challenge.

4. 19. Classic Beliefs and Ethnic Nationalism

ICU in Somalia defined one of its ideal political goals to be the unification of the Muslims of Somali in the Horn of Africa in a united territory (Abbink, 2009, p. 98, 102). Al-Shabaab

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additionally defined one of its goal to be the establishment of "Great Somalia" and a nation state (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2015). One of the causes of the conflict between the state and LRA has roots in traditional beliefs or the cosmological ideology of the Akoli people that invite them to confront the state to save themselves (Le Sage, 2011, p. 2; Jackson, 2010, p. 11, 17).

4. 20. Historical Events, Historical Memory and Nationalist Spirit

One of the causes of the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia pertains to Islamophobia and Christian people's negative attitude toward Muslims, which is the result of historical contentions between these religion followers (Østebø, 2013, pp. 1035-1036). In the Central African Republic, one of the causes of the conflicts between Muslim Seleka and Christian Anti-balaka has roots in the history of the state and a lack of trust between the followers of religions (Deiros, 2014, p. 4).

In Sudan, one of the causes of the conflicts between north and south and the collapse of the state is the history of violence and slave holding against the South in the process of integrating the region into the state system of Sudan (Sidahmed & Sidahmed, 2005, p. 137). In the north of Nigeria, one of the causes of the ethnic and religious conflicts pertains to the pre-colonial era and the kings' actions to impose their religion on the people (Alhaji-shehu, 2012, p. 24). In this country, one of the causes of the ethnic and religious conflicts is historical memory in relation with slave trade and transporting tribal people as salves, which resulted in the division of ethnic groups (Phillips, 2004, pp. 37-39).

In Ghana, ethnic tensions before the colonial era account for one of the causes of ethnic conflicts (Berry, 1995, p. 79). In the conflict

between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the leaders have demonstrated intense patriotic emotions. The historical contexts of Eritrea's independence and accusing Ethiopia of invading Eritrea's territory have had an effective role in the conflict (Tesfamichael, 2011, pp. 18-19).

In the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, one of the causes of the conflict pertains to the sense of historical humiliation of the North by the South (Ottaway & El-Sadany, 2012, p. 6). One of the causes of the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Lake Albert pertains to the lack of trust between the two states due to historical occurrences (Westerkamp & Houdret, 2010, p. 21).

4. 21. Territorialization and Expansionism by the States and Endeavor to Seize the Space and Control its Resources

One of the causes of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is territorialization and expansionism of Badme and the surrounding areas whose ownership of the territory is claimed by the parties (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2014, pp. 7-8). In the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan, one of the causes of the conflict pertains to the competition over oil rich areas and in particular the Ebiyi region (Ottaway & El-Sadany, 2012, p. 6, 9, 11).

One of the causes of the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria over Bakassi peninsula lies in the oil extraction potentiality of the region along with its fishery resources (Tarlebbea & Baroni, 2010, p. 203). Competition over natural resources in the Atlas Ocean has paved the way for conflict between Ghana and the Ivory Coast (Bening, 2014, pp. 82-83).

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One of the causes of the conflict between Equatorail Guinea and Gabon pertains to the parties' territorialization, expansionism, and dispute over the islands of Corisco Bay (Yoon, 2009, p. 20). One of the causes of the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Lake Albert region pertains to the dispute over the oil-rich island of Rukwanzi and the occupation of the Ituri (Westerkamp & Houdret, 2010, pp. 10-11).

4. 22. Conflict over a Strategic Boundary Area between the States

In the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, one of the causes of the conflict pertains to the dispute over Aseb port and the sense of land locked by Ethiopia (Tesfamichael, 2011, pp. 18-19). Some of the causes of the conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt and Sudan pertain to the immense importance of the Nile River for these states and in particular for Egypt (Swain, 2011, p. 688).

One of the causes of the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon pertains to the conflict over the strategic location of Bakassi (Shaibu, Azom, & Nwanze, 2015, p. 31). One of the causes of the conflict between Eritrea and Yemen on Hanish-Zuqar Archipelago in Red Sea pertains to the sea's geopolitical and geostrategic importance (Stansfield, 2001, p. 20).

4. 23. Settlement of a Minority Group of the Neighboring State in the Disputed Territory

One of the causes of the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over Bakassi pertains to the demographic and cultural texture of the region which is similar to Nigeria's, and this state's claim on it (Shaibu et al., 2015, p. 34). In the conflict between Uganda and the

Democratic Republic of Congo over Rokuvanzi, the presence of a Ugandan minority group in this island led to Uganda's claim on the island (Westerkamp & Houdret, 2010, p. 11).

4. 24. Weakness in Delimitation and Accurate Border Marking

One of the causes of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia pertains to the inaccurate delimitation of the borders after Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia (International Crisis Group, 2003, p. 2; Tesfamichael, 2011, p. 17). One of the causes of the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan pertains to the inaccurate delimitation of the borders after the collapse of Sudan (Ottaway & El-Sadany, 2012, p. 10). One of the causes of the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Lake Albert pertains to the border disputes in the lake region (Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2014, p. 7; Westerkamp & Houdret, 2010, p. 11).

4. 25. Marginality of Some Regions

One of the causes of the conflict in the border areas of Somalia and Kenya pertains to the marginality of these regions and poor governance of the state in the regions, which resulted in instability and conflict. In Kenya, vast, marginalized and frontier regions in the border areas of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda are not under the absolute control of the states and the authority of state governance ranges from tenuous to non-existent (Menkhaus, 2008, p. 24).

5. Analysis and Conclusions

This paper studied the geopolitical causes of conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa since the end of the Cold War. 20

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states from the 29 states located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, including Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, are involved in a total of 40 conflicts.

In order to achieve the purpose of the research and answer its main question, in the theoretical framework section, views and theories of conflict in the fields of political science, sociology, international relations as well as geography and geopolitics were examined and the most important factors influencing the occurrence of conflict were extracted based on these theories and views. Then, defining geopolitics as "the science of studying the relation between geography, power and politics and transactions resulted from their combination" and relying on this as a comprehensive definition, 40 conflicts in the countries located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa were identified and examined. In addition, the geopolitical root causes of these conflicts were identified and analyzed based on evidence.

The conflicts in this region, in terms of type and nature, include three categories, namely ethnic and tribal conflicts, interfaith and religious conflicts, and boundary and territorial conflicts. The results indicate that the causes of the conflicts have a geopolitical nature and in each of them geopolitics and the composition of politics, power, and geographical factors play a role. In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, geopolitical causes of the conflict constitute the following:

a. *Territorialization and expansionism of ethnic groups and tribes*

and competition over lands and water resources: Territorialization and protection of space, place, and resources by ethnic groups and tribes, expansionism and endeavor to seize the lands and resources of other ethnic groups and tribes, formed competitions in this frame, the state's interventions to settle the conflicts in unstable regions that indicates how "geography" as a factor plays a role in the frame of space, place and resources, the "power" element in the competition between ethnic groups and tribes that strive for expansionism, and the "politics" element in the frame of the state's intervention to settle the conflict that indicates the geopolitical nature of the issue. In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, some of the causes of the conflict on the intrastate level and border areas have roots in territorialization, and the competition among ethnic groups and tribes inside and outside of the borders. Territorialization and the competition of ethnic groups and tribes to protect vital resources such as water, land, and pastures is a geopolitical maneuver to keep and protect geographical space and to earn power and superiority that can affect the states, both inside and outside the borders. This factor is one of the causes of the ethnic conflict in the east, west, south, southwest, and southeast of Ethiopia; the ethnic conflict in Darfur (Sudan); the ethnic conflict in Niger Delta in Nigeria; the ethnic conflict in the north, northeast, and south of Ghana; the conflict in the cacao farming region of the Ivory Coast; the conflict in Guinea-Bissau; the conflict between Somaliland and Puntland in Somalia; the conflict in Tana Delta (Nigeria); and the boundary conflict between Somalia and Kenya.

b. *Colonial actions in creating imposed borders (nation and state building):* Colonial actions of the European states in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa have a geopolitical nature. One of

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the most significant actions of these sates was the creation of imposed borders between African states. The main objective of imposing these borders was to increase power through territorial expansionism and attempt to seize territory and to benefit from natural resources, all of which account for the elements of geography, politics, and power in the frame of geopolitics. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the state in Ethiopia; in the conflicts of ARDUF and the Ethiopian state; the tribal conflict in the east of Ethiopia; ethnic tensions in Ghana; the conflicts about establishing Somaliland and Puntland in the north of Somalia; the conflicts in the Casamance region of Senegal; the conflicts between Ethiopia and Eritrea; Ethiopia's conflict with Egypt and Sudan over the Nile River; the conflict between Eritrea and Djibouti over Ras Doumeira; the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over Bakassi; the conflict between the Ivory Coast and Ghana in the Atlas Ocean; and the conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon in the Gulf of Guinea.

c. *State weakness in optimal management of the territory and lack of spatial justice:* States manage their territories through their power to sovereign and take policies. In other words, they have access to the three elements of geopolitics; namely power, politics, and geography that its output is evolutions with geopolitical nature. The result of state's functions in positive process is the country's progress and national satisfaction, and in negative process is underdevelopment and national or partial dissatisfaction. One of the causes of the conflict and instability in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa has been state weakness. This factor is one of the causes of the ethnic and tribal conflict in the southeast and southwest of Ethiopia; the

conflict in Darfur and the east of Sudan; the conflict in the Central African Republic; the conflict in the Niger Delta (Nigeria); the ethnic conflict in Ghana; the ethnic conflict in Guiana Bissau; the conflict in Somalia; and separatism in Casamance of Senegal.

d. *Protection of identity ethnic and tribal values:* The identities of social, ethnic, and tribal groups are formed in relation with their sense of belonging to the geographical places and spaces of their birth place, inhabitation place, ethnicity, language, religion, and other types of identity-making elements and their values. Humans who feel a sense of belonging to each of these categories react to any factor that threatens their identity values. Expansionist movements in rival states, ethnicities, and tribes with the aim of seizing geographical space and places through interfering with identity values and assimilation lead to the territorialization and defensive reactions of those whose identities are under attack, which results in conflict. In this process, "geography" in the frame of identity-making places and spaces, "power" in the frame of achievement of and competition for dominance and increasing the area of influence by states or informal players, as well as the "politics" in the frame of state decisions to confront developing ethnic and tribal values or to resolve to settle the conflict has been a role player, and the conflict finds geopolitical nature. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Ethiopia; the conflict in South Kordofan of Sudan; in the separatist movements of MASSOB with the state in Nigeria; in the N'Zérékoré region in Guinea; the conflict in Somalia; and the conflict in Senegal.

e. *Ethnic discrimination policies by the states and ignoring ethnicities' rights:* Ethnic discrimination policies by the states

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and ignoring ethnicities' rights are investigated in the frame of excluding minorities and regionalism. This discrimination has a geopolitical nature which also involves politics, power and geography. Some states that are faced with cultural, identity, and political disintegration of different groups marginalize these groups' members and their homeland to dominate and suppress them and increase their own power. Marginalized groups that suffer discrimination intend to increase their own power and strive to claim their rights and possibly their political and territorial independence to secure independent space, territory, power, and state. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Ethiopia; the conflict in Darfur (Sudan); the conflict in the South African Republic; the conflict in Nigeria; the conflict in Somalia; and the conflict in Senegal.

f. *Foreign interventions and the support received by religious groups from certain states:* Foreign interventions in internal affairs of other states can be explained in the frame of geopolitical concepts of territorialization, expansionism, geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, geopolitical challenge, and geopolitical dependency. The states attempt to expand their influence area and their territory and to confront the expansionism of the other states that in this relation geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, geopolitical challenge, and geopolitical dependency find their meaning in the combination of mutual power relations, politics, and geography. In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, foreign interventions are witnessed either through the promotion of religious thoughts or the support received by opponent religious groups from foreign states. This factor is one of the causes of the conflicts in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda.

g. Territorialization and expansionism of religions followers and endeavor to establish religion-based state and religious government: This variant has a geopolitical nature in some states. Followers of religions, by protecting their homeland, intend to protect their religious places, to promote their beliefs, to fight for power, and to establish the state in their territory. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast and Uganda.

h. Territorialization and expansionism of areas populated by followers of religions and endeavor to establish a religion-based state and a religious government: Territorialization and expansionism are propositions that have a geopolitical nature, decisively. In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, it can be claimed that the main cause of all border conflicts has roots in the states' territorialization and expansionism. This issue is apparent in some of the conflicts. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan; the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria; the conflict between Ghana and Ivory Coast; the conflict between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon; and the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

i. *Competition between ethnicities to take power and their claim to authoritative roles and administration of the state:* In the multinational states located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa where the majority or the minority ethnic groups suffer marginalization, ethnic competition is severe as it provides a chance to gain power and dominance over the territory. In this situation, when a special ethnic group takes office, it excludes

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other ethnic groups and marginalizes them. This leads to tribal and ethnic conflicts and paves the way for disempowering the dominant ethnicity and undermining its control of the territory. This issue has a geopolitical nature because of the competition between ethnic groups to take office and the effects of the ethnic structure on the political system, taking power and the pattern of spatial distribution of political power, and the dominance of major ethnic group on the territory. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, and Senegal.

j. *Climate situation and Climate change:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, climate change and its negative effects on vital resources of water and land have paved the way for ethnic conflicts over these resources and, by intensification, for the states' intervention to settle the conflicts in these regions. These conflicts turn into a geopolitical phenomenon, namely "geography" in the frame of climate change with negative effects on natural resources, "politics" in the frame of state intervention as a formal actor in the political management of the territory to settle the conflict and crisis, and "politics" in the frame of competition between ethnic and tribal groups for survival through receiving the protection of the spaces which have rich resources. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in the southwest, east and south of Ethiopia, Darfur (Sudan), the north of Nigeria, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, the conflict between Egypt and Sudan, and the ethnic and tribal conflict in the border areas of Somalia and Kenya.

k. *Environmental Degradation:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, the role of environmental degradation in ethnic conflict is investigable in the frame of its effect on the decrease in vital

resources such as water and soil and its mechanism that has a geopolitical nature such as climate change. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Darfur and the east of Sudan, Niger Delta (Nigeria), Ghana, Guinea, Somalia, and the north of Rift and the northeast of Kenya.

l. *Colonial policies related to the followers of religion:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, colonial policies intended to expand their influence area and exploit valuable resources. These policies have a geopolitical nature. Some of these policies affect followers of religions in this region and result in conflicts. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, and Somalia.

m. *Conflict over a strategic boundary area between the states:* Geographic places have strategic and geostrategic importance and affect the states' relations, and make the conflicts geopolitical by playing a role as the power element for the states and affect politics and relations. In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, this factor paves the way for border conflicts. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the conflict between Ethiopia and Egypt and Sudan; the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon, and the conflict between Eritrea and Yemen.

n. *Lack of spatial justice for citizens and followers of religions:* The state is mainly responsible for spatial justice and optimal management of the space, and it has the power to manage the country by codifying different policies. Thus, the consequence of its function has a geopolitical nature. In some states located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, there is no spatial justice for citizens and followers of religions and they are not satisfied, which resulted in different conflicts. This factor is one of the

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causes of the conflict in the north of the Central African Republic; the conflict between the north and south of Sudan; Nigeria; and Uganda.

o. *Religious minority groups' lack of participation in the power structure and the administration of the state:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, people in terms of religions are categorized into Islamic, Christians and local customs followers. Followers of Islam and Christianity are more in number. All of these religious groups claim their share in the power structure and participation in the state administration. In the states in which the religions' followers are marginalized and do not contribute to state administration, competition to take power are intensified. In a situation that the followers of a particular religion take office, they exclude other religions' followers. This situation paves the way for conflict and increases the intensities of the endeavors to weaken the state and control the state. This issue has a geopolitical nature because followers of religions compete over achieving state positions, take political power, and dominate territorial space. This factor is one of the causes of conflict in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Nigeria, and Uganda.

p. *Historical events and historical memory:* One of the causes of the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa pertains to the historical memory shaped by occurrences that have a geopolitical nature. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Ethiopia; the Central African Republic; Sudan; the north of Nigeria; Ghana; the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan; and the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

q. *Weakness in delimitation and accurate border marking:* State as

a supreme executive body in the political organization of the state territory has the duty to follow accurate marking of the borders based on international rules and agreements with neighbors. Lack of attention to this issue and ambiguity in marking the borders pave the way for conflict with neighboring states, which causes an issue with a geopolitical nature. This issue plays a role in some of the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia; the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan; and the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

r. *Promotion of nationalism:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, some of the causes of the border conflict have roots in the attitude toward historic geographical evolutions and the nationalist spirit that dominates the sovereign nation and state. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan.

s. *The role of the state's special policies:* The state that has the power of sovereignty codifies some policies to manage the territory which in some cases results in ethnic and tribal conflicts. In this process, both starting the program and its execution have a geopolitical nature that is caused by the composition of power-related, political, and geographical elements. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Ethiopia; the conflict in the cacao farms in the Ivory Coast; and the conflict in the Tana Delta in Kenya.

t. *State policies violating the religious rights of citizens:* State policies violating the religious rights of citizens in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa can be studied as religious regionalism and marginalization of special religion followers

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that has a geopolitical nature. Some states that are faced with the disintegration of certain religious groups marginalize the followers in order to control and weaken them. The followers come into conflict over their rights and the right to take power, space, and territory as they face discrimination by the states. This factor is one of the causes of conflict in the east of Sudan; and in the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

u. *Traditional beliefs and ethnic nationalism:* In some states located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, religious groups' adherence to traditional beliefs and ethnic nationalism is one of the causes of a conflict with a geopolitical nature. That is to say, a particular religious group in addition to emphasizing religion as the corner stone of its identity, defines its identity in relation with belonging to a special geographical space and place and to a special ethnic group, and beside of prejudice to the religion, greater to ethnic and place belongings. In this situation, this group competes with others to take power and engages in territorialization and expansionism to protect its identity values. This factor is one of the causes of conflict in Somalia and Uganda.

v. *Marginality of some regions:* In some of the regions marginalized from the center, the state governance is poor, and the political management of the space in these regions is unproductive. The consequences and the conflicts are the result of the roles played by power, politics, and geography, all of which give the issue a geopolitical nature. This issue plays a role in some of the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in border areas of Somalia and Kenya.

w. *Settlement of a minority group of the neighboring state in the disputed territory:* A nation with people who have a common identity and a sense of belonging to a territorial space is the main part of a state. In some of the states, because of the imposed borders and a lack of attention to the demographic texture, geographic places are divided and some parts of the nation are located in the territory of neighboring states, which resulted in the discontent of the disintegrated people and the states. This issue has a geopolitical nature and plays a role in some of the conflicts in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon; and the conflict between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

x. *Protection of religious identities and values:* In certain states located in circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, religion is one of the most important factors giving shape to the identities of people and social groups who live in geographical places. People with their sense of belonging to these values react to the threatening factors. Expansionist movements to seize geographical spaces and places through interfering with religious, identity values, and identity assimilation cause negative reactions of the opponents, which results in conflict. In this process, "geography" in the frame of identity-making places and spaces, "power" in the frame of competition for dominance, increasing the area of influence by states or informal players, and "politics" in the frame of state decisions to confront developing ethnic and tribal values or to settle the conflict give the conflict a geopolitical nature. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia and the conflict in Sudan.

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y. *Being affected by regional geopolitical evolutions:* In circle 0 to 15th parallel north of Africa, regional geopolitical evolutions have contributed to the ethnic conflict in the states. That is to say, ethnic groups that are not satisfied with the status quo come into conflict with the state when a geopolitical evolution takes place in a neighboring country. This factor is one of the causes of the conflict in Senegal; and the conflict in the Central African Republic.

z. *Neighboring states' interventions in the internal affairs of the neighbors:* A state intervention in the internal affairs of other states can be explained through the frame of geopolitical concepts such as territorialization, expansionism, geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, geopolitical challenge, and geopolitical dependency. The states attempt to expand their influence area and their territory to confront the expansionism of other states. In this regard, geopolitical code, geopolitical interests, geopolitical challenge, and geopolitical dependency find their significance in the combination of mutual power relations, politics, and geography. This factor accounts for one of the causes of conflict in Ethiopia; Somalia; and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Due to their comprehensiveness in characterizing the geopolitical roots of the conflicts and their repeatability when examining the causes of conflicts in other regions, the research findings are generalizable. They have also set the ground for proposing a theory entitled "the geopolitical theory of conflicts." Based on this theory, the states conflicts in local, national, regional, and global levels have geopolitical roots and are the result of the active roles of power, politics, and geographical elements. This theory addresses the geopolitical causes of the conflict as follows:

1. Territorialization and expansionism of ethnic groups and tribes and competition over lands and water resources;
2. Colonial actions to create imposed borders (nation and state building) in regions with history of colonial suppression;
3. State's weakness in optimal management of their territories and a lack of spatial justice;
4. Protection of ethnic and tribal values and identities;
5. Ethnic discrimination policies by the states and exclusion of ethnicities' rights;
6. Foreign interventions and the support received by religious groups from certain states;
7. Environmental degradation;
8. Territorialization and expansionism of areas populated by followers of religions and endeavor to establish a religion-based state and a religious government;
9. Territorialization and expansionism by the states and endeavor to seize the space and to control its resources;
10. Competition between ethnicities to take power and their claim to authoritative roles and the administration of the state;
11. Climate situation and climate change;
12. Colonial policies related to the followers of religions;
13. Conflict over a strategic boundary area between the states;
14. Lack of spatial justice for citizens and followers of religions;
15. Religious minority groups' lack of participation in the power structure and the administration of the state;
16. Historical events and historical memory;
17. Weakness in delimitation and accurate border marking;
18. Promotion of nationalism;
19. The role of a given state's special policies;
20. State policies violating the religious rights of citizens;
21. Traditional beliefs and ethnic nationalism;
22. Marginality of certain regions;

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23. Settlement of a minority group of the neighboring state in the disputed territory;

24. Protection of religious identities and values;

25. Being affected by regional geopolitical evolutions;

26. Neighboring states' interventions in the internal affairs of the neighbors.

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