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## Religious Influence in Schooling:
## How is Education contributing to Conflicts in West Africa?

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# An Introduction to
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**Abstract**

Many countries in West Africa are experiencing instability and conflict. This violence forcesscholars, politicians, and practitioners to evaluate and examine the issues of religionsurrounding the fighting. While there is a visible clash between Islam and Christianity (representing the West), there are additional complexities to each of the separateconflicts that help explain the resulting violence. By examining thephenomenon(s), this paper explores how schooling has been in the middle of struggle of power and influence between global powers and trends. This literature review examines the question: What is the link between education and religion in West Africa and how has that contributed to current religious conflicts in West Africa? This discussion will contribute to a deeper analysis of the trends inthe development of current Christian and Muslim doctrines and how education is involved inthe evolving conflicts as a struggle for external influence persist. This paperargues that the history of the introduction of the two religions contributes to currentconflicts and the colonial competition is being replicated.

**Keywords:** Education, Religion, Conflict, Identity, West Africa

Current events in West Africa have demanded a refocusing on the impact of religion in the region. The region is facing a major regionalconflict in the Sahara within the borders of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, the brutal insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria that is spilling over to Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, internal fighting in Cote D'Ivoire, and a civil war in Central African Republic. These concerning events have forced scholars, politicians, and practitioners to evaluate and examine the issues of religion surrounding the fighting. While there is a visible clash between Islam and Christianity (representing the West), there are additional complexities to each of the separate conflicts that help explain the resulting violence. Examining the religious phenomenon(s) is essential to understanding the history and explaining factors causing the escalation in violence today, however, the story is incomplete without including the role of education. This paper is a literature review that examines:What is the link between education and religion in West Africa and how has that contributed to current religious conflicts in West Africa? This discussion will contribute to a deeper analysis of the trends in the development of current Christian and Muslim doctrines and how education is contributing to an evolving religious practice within both religions. This paper argues that the history of the introduction of the two religions contributes to current conflicts. For this paper, West Africa is defined as the 15 countries that make up the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This includes 8 former French colonies, 5 former English colonies, and 2 former Portuguese colonies. The impact of the colonial history will be discussed throughout this paper.

The first section of this paper discusses the introduction of Islam into West Africa. This section will demonstrate the difference between the original practice of the religion and current dogma that is being (re)introduced. The second section examines the introduction of Christianity through European colonialism. Section three looks at the early relationship betweenIslam and Christianity in West Africa. Section four will examine the influence these forces have had on schooling in West Africa. The paper will conclude with a discussion where the author highlights factors that contribute and heighten the conflict. This paper is an important review. Much of the violence in the region is mistakenly oversimplified as terrorism. This simplification makes it more difficult to end the conflicts and allows many contributing parties to avoid taking responsibility for their contributions to the unrest. Finally, despite the purpose of this paper to acknowledge the complexities of the violence, it is impossible to do justice to all the factors that contribute to violence in one paper. For example, concerning trends such as politicians capitalizing on the violence to gain legitimacy (or threaten the legitimacy of another political party) is not examined and is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the exercise in drawing parallels from the introduction to two outside religions through schooling to today's competition for influence can allow insight into why West Africa is inundated by conflict largely brought by outsiders and how to disrupt harmful patterns.

**History of Islam**

Islam was introduced to West Africa by early Arab traders in the 9th and 10th century. Pockets of Muslim coverts were established along the trade routes throughout the Sahara and Sahel region. By the 11th century, Islam had spread to the rainforests of coastal land. The kingdoms in present day Ghana and Mali had significant Muslim populations (Levtzion, 2000). These communities were in isolated areas, so the spread of Islam was batch and isolated (Sanneh, 1983).

Convergence often occurred due to a respect and accommodation for the traders. Kings would declare allegiance to Allah in the presence of traders and the community. This spawned large pockets of the community, particularly men, to convert to Islam. The motivation could have been to flatter the traders in hopes to facilitate good trade relations. Most new converts were in name only, as they continued to practice their indigenous religions (Levtzion, 2000).

Rulers helped their communities mediate between the new religion, Islam, and the traditional religious practices. As continued to be seen today, kingdoms would take Islam and shape it as their own as they continued to practice their indigenous beliefs (Sanneh, 1983). Rulers limited Islam's influences on politics in the area (Levtzion, 2000).

Despite the limitations on influences in politics, Quranic learning was incorporated throughout the West African region. Quranic schools were the first 'formal' schooling introduced to the region. These schools would teach the Koran in Arabic. There was traveling priests and teachers that would travel with trading caravans. When they arrived in a town that had a Muslim population lacking a school or Islamic teacher, they would stay behind to create a Quranic school. These schools were nomadic, adjusting to the way of life of the population. Today, many of the nomadic ethnic groups practice Islam which may be the result of the mobility of the early Quranic schools. Quranic schools taught nonviolence, tolerance for other religions, and even incorporated curriculums on geography and science. Girls attendance varied based on local customs among different tribes. However, in some places, girls' attendance was equal to that of boys. The majority of Muslim scholars was progressive and endorsed social reforms (Kaba, 2000).

West Africa became an important place for Muslim scholars and Islamic learning. Much of the learning and schools were influenced by Muslim scholars coming from Egypt. Timbuktu in Mali was a world-renowned center for Muslim teaching, with a university that Muslims scholar traveled far to study at. Literacy in Arabic was introduced through the production of poetry and schooling. The Arabic language was used for diplomacy and communication throughout the region (Kaba, 2000).

**History of Christianity**

Christianity came to the West African region much later than Islam. Brought in the early 15th century by Europeans, Christianity remained isolated in trading towns along the coast. The religion did not start to spread until the first church that

was established by the Portuguese in Ghana (Sanneh, 1983). There is much research and scholarship done on the spread of Christianity and its influence on Sub-Sahara Africa. There is a debate on the motivations as well as the negative and positive consequences of the spread of Christianity through missionary schools. To understand the history of Christianity in West Africa, colonialism must be addressed. While the Portuguese did little within their colonies, the French and English developed more infrastructures, including missionary schools, in their colonies. The French's motivation for schooling was mainly for proselytism and helping the colonist government. The French were known for limiting local ambitions and had little interest in developing individual talents unless to service the French mission. The English invested the most in their colonies but while they may have been more encouraging toward developing locals' knowledge, they were motivated to spread Christianity and "civilize" the populations (Ouedraogo, 2010). The colonialists largely ignored the landlock interior, limiting their influence to the coast (Ofori-Attah, 2006; Sanneh, 1983).

Missionary schools and churches were quickly established in the West African colonies. With an attempt to spread Christianity, Bibles were translated into local languages, students at missionary schools were required to learn the colonial language, as well as convert to Christianity. Once convert, students were given new Christian names and trained to be local teachers and priests, in order to continue the spread of the religion (Ofori-Attah, 2006; Ouedraogo, 2010). While being part of a mission elevated the 'status' of an African in the eyes of the colonialists, it stripped individuals of their African identity. In fact, this was the point. Missionaries believe that they were doing service to "educate" the "salvages". Missionaries believed it was necessary to cleanse the population of local indigenous beliefs and practices as they were seen as harmful. Missionary schools brought literacy to a select few among the coastal population. Schools taught arithmetic, reading and religion. However, there was no diversity in the theme. All the material dealt with biblical themes (Ofori-Attah, 2006).

**Struggle for Influence: The Early Relationship between Islam and Christianity**

As Islam was coming to the interior from the north and east and Christianity was being brought from ships to the coast, there was not much interaction between the two religions at first. Christian missionaries mostly ignored Islam's presence. Muslims would attend mission schools without converting to Christianity, but their Muslim beliefs were looked over with a hope to convert the young student (Sanneh, 1983).

Once Islam's influence in the region became more visible, colonists' governments oscillated between cooperation and distrust. Early Christian missionaries had respect for some of the tenants of Islam that were being practiced by the local population, such as refraining from alcohol. They viewed Islam as a step up on the ladder from "barbarism" and helping with the "backward" ways of the local population. However, Islam was thought of as inferior to Christianity. Missionaries believed that Muslims

needed to continue to become civilized through Christianity and adapting European practices and beliefs as well (Sanneh, 1983; Triaud, 2002).

Despite periods of cooperation, such as during World War I when Muslims fought with the Allies, there was little respect. French colonists never recognized Muslim leadership. Constant fear of resistance from Muslim populations is evident. Resistance did come from pockets of Muslim communities that resisted the growing colonial, Christian influence (Sanneh, 1983). There were often distinguishes made between "good" and "bad" Islam groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and others coming from Algeria. The French had a 'Muslim Policy' and later established "Service of Muslim Affairs" that provided surveillance and monitoring of Muslim populations (Triaud, 2000). Before independence, madrasas had long been monitored and controlled by the colonial government without recognition and continued to be marginalized despite gaining integration (Brenner, 2001).

This distrust effected how Christian missionary and Quranic schools were eventually integrated into public schools once the West African nations gained independence. Once independent, countries dealt differently with their Muslim communities. Guinea integrated its communities while Cote D'Ivoire marginalized its northern, Muslim communities. Countries with large Muslim populations were influenced and received money for schooling from Arab states such as Qaddafi's Libya (Kaba, 2000). Islamic madrasas taught the Koran along with secular subjects. Christian missionary schools were immediately incorporated into the national formal schooling systems from the beginning of independence, madrasas were not recognized as formal schools until 1980.


**Colonial and Islamic Influences on Schooling**

Today, colonial (Christian) and Islamic influences continue to have a great influence on the public and private education systems throughout West Africa (Quist, 2010; Ouedraogo, 2010; Sanneh, 1997). Since the introduction of Christian (Western) missionary schooling and Quranic and madrasas (East/North) schooling, there has been a competition between these two outside influences in the West African region (Quist, 2010, Sanneh, 1997). These two influences have competed for cultural and religious coverts, often drawing invisible lines within countries. As discussed earlier European colonialists created oppressive policies toward the Islamic presence in West Africa. The aim was to control and limit the spread and influence of Islam along with the cultural impact coming from the Arab world (Sanneh, 1997).

Within this competition, the African self, including the cultural and religious beliefs indigenous to West Africa, was unacknowledged. Neither the West nor the East/North imperialists held much value for the contribution of the African cultural heritage and existing schooling as well as religion. Thus, from the early 1900s until today, there is a presence of Christian/Western, Islamic, and African heritage throughout the region. Quist (2010) labels this phenomenon as the "triple cultural heritage".

This "triple cultural heritage" is often carried out as a competition of influence. Education through formal and informal schooling has been a major platform for carrying out this competition (Quist, 2010, Sanneh, 1997). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) discuss how schooling is used for reproduction culture, norms, and beliefs. Reproduction through schooling is clearly played out in West Africa. The reproduction occurs within a competitive, often oppressive setting and creates conflict. There are competing ideals within the approaches to education (and thus, reproduction) within the "triple cultural heritage". Quist (2010) organized a diagram demonstrating the similarities and differences between Christian/Western education, African education and Islamic/North/East education in the following chart:

**Table 1**.*"The 'triple culture heritage' and its secondary educational features"***

| Christian/Western Education | Similarities | African Education | Similarities | Islamic Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Literate Written Instruction School hours Oral instruction Individual- oriented Structured time-tables Examination-oriented Use of English/French | School hours Oral Instruction | Community Oriented Non literate Oral instruction No textbooks No rigid and structure timetable Local language School hours | School hours Community-oriented Commitment of knowledge to memory | Time-table Use of Arabic Community-oriented Koran-based instruction-text Oral Instruction School hours Rote-learning |

*adapted from (Quist, 2010 p. 303)

As evident by the chart, the three cultural approaches have differences and similarities that have created complexities and conflicts throughout the region. Western influences have enjoyed more political and economic power within the region, often by oppressing African and Islamic influences. Hilliard (1978) discusses how the notion of a 'deficit' in the oppressed is constructed and taught through schooling. African heritage has experienced this in an effort to assimilate and adapt Africans to a more Western way of living. There has also been a similar trend to discredit Islam as backward and limiting. There is much evidence of overt and covert campaigns used to discredit African and Islam heritage which has been largely successful in West Africa. A study (Quist, 2010) reveals that students in urban centers of Cote D'Ivoire and Ghana prefer colonial language, music, schooling and clothing to African or Islamic styles of music, schooling, clothing, and language. Western culture is more desired and viewed as civilized compared to African or Islamic culture (Quist, 2010). Comparisons done in Burkina Faso between Christian private schools, Islamic schooling, and public schooling shows a difference in results in assessment as well as a preference for private, Christian schooling (Ouedraogo, 2010). The success of Western dominance, often being reproduced through schooling, creates a threat to Islamic and African identity. This threat appears to be playing out in political and social conflicts, often through violence (Sanneh, 1997).

**A Cyclical Phenomenon**

The history is eerily familiar, in a large part, because it resembles parts of the phenomena that is occurring today in West Africa. The conflicts driven by extremist groups, ranging from Boko Haram's terror in Northern Nigeria, to Al-Qaeda and ISIS groups in Northern Mali, along with civil conflict seen in Cote d'Ivoire and Central African Republic (CAR) all carry elements of outside forces struggling for influence and control. While much of the focus is on Jihad terrorist groups with anti-West agendas, at the same time, there is a raise in Christianity in many West African countries. In 2013, The Center for the Study of Global Christianity published a report citing four West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea) among the top 20 countries in the world with the highest percentage of Christianity Average Annual Growth Rate. Throughout Africa, Christianity is on the rise, while Islam remains constant and the practice of indigenous beliefs decreasing (Johnson & Zurlo, 2016).

To illustrate the parallels: Islamic influences are vying for control, power, and influence from the north, where the religion was originally introduced. Christianity, on the rise in the same region, is being spread from organized groups originating from the West in addition to internal conversion, and equally vying for influence. What we are seeing mirrors the Christian colonialists' actions when they felt threaten by Muslim influences from the North/East. What is new to the script, is how a more extreme Islamic influence is being brought to the region and being applied with the force similar to how Christianity and its values were applied during the colonial period. As a result, an overt, violent confrontation between the West and North/East for competing for dominance and influence in the name of religion is occurring. As usual, we are witnessing how education has a critical place in the competition. Christianity is embedded through funded private schools and through religiously-affiliated development organizations. There is has been much success in aligning formal, superior education with Christian doctrine. In attempts to counter such influence, Jihad groups aim to shut down public schools, viewed as the legacy of European colonialization, while pushing local populations to send their children to Quranic schools that teach the Koran in Arabic. As in the colonial period, what is absent is the voice of the local people. The "triple cultural heritage" continues with increasing ethnic and religion strife that is represented by civil wars, divided countries, and local terrorist groups carrying out largely outside agendas. As demonstrated by Quist (2010) there is a limited alignment between the education systems, along with the values espoused by Christianity and Islam. In a large part, it is nonsensical that West Africans governments are not only accepting but being active actors in this violent competition that is further destroying the economic development of their countries where much of the population already lives in dire poverty.

## Conflict of Identity

There is a large amount of research examining colonial and Islamic influences, oppression of African indigenous cultures and the role of education between all three of these competing influences resulting in disruption of identity. There is extensive documentation of the connection of crisis in identity and violence (Broch-Due, 2005). Due to the numerous conflicts that evoke religious division, often simplified as ethnic or religion violence, it is vital that there continues to be an examination of the historical and modern spread of beliefs through education systems. Children have been sitting in schools that teach them an outside religion, language, and culture, even within the national public school system. Adding to this, children and whole communities are victims of violence resulting from the competition for influence between the western Christian and the Islamic Jihadists. Not only are African children literally being taught another's culture, but also being told that their own culture, language and beliefs are subpar to outside ideals. African nations are being shamed for adopting and falling influence of the competing group. This phenomenon is seen when local Jihadist enter French and English influenced public schools to shut them down due to speaking the "wrong" language and teach the "wrong" material. Likewise, Christians and entire nations judge any African adoption of Muslim values and promote actively against Quranic education. Such shaming and influencestrips pride and weakens a society's esteem (Hilliard, 1978). While it is beyond the scope of this paper, there is research that connects loss of identity with low self-esteem and additional research that connects low self-esteem with conflict and disorganization (Broch-Due, 2005). One does not have to look far into West Africa to see signs of disarray and disorganization as countries GDPs fall and state institutions continue to weaken. Thus, it is not difficult to argue that countries in West Africa are existing in a fragile economic state.

With such fragility comes increased competition of resources and fear. As Hilliard (1978) alludes, oppression breeds insecurity. Radical Islam and violence in the name of Islamic values are a result of a strong Western influence coupled with increasing oppression and dismissal of Islamic influences. The combination of a vulnerable African identity and a threatened Islamic influence, creates a perfect storm between (and within) the "triple cultural heritage" which gives way to violence and division throughout West African.

Often the internal strife is due to limited resources such as food and water translate in headlines as "ethnic violence" in Africa countries (Broch-Due, 2005). I highlight how marginalization, often a cause for "ethnic violence", can quickly be capitalized on by outside groups to spread outside influence and be embedded in the larger phenomenon through the example of the current conflict spilling in to Burkina Faso from Mali. In fact, the conflict was herald into Mali through Jihadist groups taking advantage of the priorities of a historically marginalized group in Mali. The dramatic takeover of northern Mali by Tuareg separatists in an (brief) alliance with Jihadist groups made international highlights and was haltered by French military forces. The Tuareg found a friend in groups of foreign fightersin their long struggle as a marginalized nomadic people, long neglected by the

official government of Mali. This turn of events was perhaps not too surprising but would not have been possible if the groups were not empowered through heavy arms as a result of the sudden fall of Gaddafi in nearby Libya. Equally not surprising, the alliance was short lived due to the brief intersections of agendas between the two groups. The Tuareg has suffered under Jihadist rule in northern Mali, with many fleeing to neighboring countries to escape the oppression of Sharia Law, exasperating their marginalized status.

From these events, the whole of the north is destabilized as Jihadist groups impose their own laws in entire towns and recruit local men to battle a strong presence of French and UN military. While the French intervention prevented the whole country from falling to the terrorist groups, there is a clear symbolism to these two groups fighting what is a battle in a global war on Malian soil. In the past weeks, "ethnic violence" has emerged between Peul and Dogon communities in the Mopti region, resulting in over 3000 people crossing into Burkina Faso to fleet (Africa Prime News, 2018). The article reporting the violence was titled, "Ethnic Violence Pushes 3,000 Malians To Burkina Faso Crisis Zone, UN Says". The flow of refugees into the regional city of Ouahigouya in northern Burkina Faso threatens to spread the insecurity and locals are worried that it will bring the jihadist attacks that have so far been isolated to the far north corner of the country. Now, what is a global war being fought on foreign soil has created a local conflict that international observers will label as another example how Africans' are self-defeating and unable to "develop" on their own. Though the language of "backward people" have been replaced by more political correct language, the news reports paint such a picture to explain the violence that origins lay in the larger conflict. While there has always been tension between different groups, this new "ethnic violence" is occurring due to the destruction of local leadership (that have traditional waged peace through negotiating around conflicts) and the lack of basic resources.

**Role of the State**

Unlike during the colonial period, countries are recognized as independent and have official governments. What is the role of the state during these conflicts? How can a government have the strength and legitimacy when its own identity is fragile and caught between global competition of influence? Why are governments seemingly powerless to defend against such devastating disruptions? Often former colonial powers are accused in meddling with elections, or worse, facilitating changes in power. Many in Burkina Faso believe the French were behind the assassination of President Thomas Sankara, who did not unquestioningly adopt a western ideology, but instead led his country in building on its African identity. One example of this was changing the name of the country from Upper Volta, given by the French, to Burkina Faso, which is taken from two languages spoken in the country and translates to "The Land of Upright People".

From the 1990s, western influence has easily dominated through the Structural Adjustment Programs implemented by the World Bank (which passes on western ideals).Westerninfluence, from colonialism to modern structural adjustment

programs coming from international organizations, have altered the African system of education. This has challenged and undermined the authentic African identity and voice which undoubtedly contributes to the current violence in the region today. Broch-Due (2012), among others, expands on the results of western influence in the name of development,

> "Grand schemes to develop public services have been nipped in the bud by the combined effects of homebred corruption and the push toward privatization imposed by the global banking and development conglomerate. This has led to a breakdown of the redistributive function of the state and its ability to provide welfare, education, health and service to its citizens." (p.3)

Such a breakdown makes a state vulnerable and invites conflict, particularly as corruption and privatization creates inequalities and competition for resources. The state's limited ability to provide social services exasperates marginalization, which in turns fuels conflict. Gaps in basic services such as security and education start to get filled by other groups, often in a bid to gain legitimacy among the population. This can be seen in every conflict in West Africa. In Burkina Faso, the Peul nomadic group has traditionally been marginalized, however, recently, the oppression has been heighten through the conflict. This group serves as a strong example of how many African ethnic communities continue to be caught between two outside influences. The Peul have been particularly targeted by international (western) agendas such as Education For All (EFA) and the development goals aimed at increasing enrollment in formal school that is based on the French System. Jihadist groups have also targeted Peul communities, demanding through a show of force, that children not be exposed to French schooling but instead enrolled in Quranic education. What was unthinkable to most Burkinabé a decade ago has become reality: a local jihadist group, Ansarul Islam, in Burkina Faso. The founder of this group, Malam Ibrahim Dicko, became popular for speaking against the corruption of local religious leaders. Ansarul Islam has gotten local support, albeit limited, among young Peul youth. Despite the religious dogma and attacks carried out in the name of Jihad, these youthsassert that they are driven by the indignities they and their communities have suffered by the national government. A fighter, arrested for carrying out an attack on a military base in northern Burkina Faso told Le Monde Afrique that his motives were not religious or anti-west, but to bring attention to the discrimination taking place against his community by the state. He reported that security men, suspected to be employed by the government of Burkina Faso, beat and killed his adoptive father (Le Cam, 2017). This example demonstrates the complexities of such conflicts and how the state can take a duel role: as an oppressor and an actor of limited agency.

**Influence of Education**

As demonstrated, formal and informal education has played a part in the historical impact of today's insecurities in West Africa. Islam and Christian missionaries both used education as a way to indoctrinate the local populations.

Schooling was and continues to be a successful method of reproduction and converting Africans to Islam or Christianity as well as spreading influence as global power vie for power. The integration of both Islamic and Christian schooling into public school systems within West Africa has institutionalized the competition for the spread of influence (Ouedraogo, 2010). The rivalry has little to do with Africans. They seem to be a pawn in a larger game of power and control.

Education will continue to be used for reproduction. Value of African heritage and religion must be given in public school. This will only happen if African governments are able to control what is being (re)produced in the educational systems of their countries. The global competition for power and influence will not dissipate, thus realistic steps must be implemented to reduce the harm of the past and prevent growing conflict. Admittedly, this seems like an impossible task and may be due to the global systems in place. How can violence that started from a dramatic rejection of western values and institutions but solved by western values and institutions? Is not transnational organizations coming to address the conflict through programs using western language, terms, solutions, and programs only going to fuel the violence as this is the very thing many Jihadist from the North/East are fighting? And hasn't these same western governments and institutions historically failed the African people? While whole systems and realities cannot be denied nor reserved, moving toward an education that is aligned with West African values, as suggested by Quist (2010) can help address some underlying issues such as identity and belonging as well as issues exasperated by the conflicts, such as marginalization of groups. Implementing the African identity back into schooling can strengthen the local populations' ability to deal with violence and competition from outside forces. An example of the success of a local solution in Burkina Faso can illustrate the potential legitimacy of this suggestion. As Jihadist attacks spilt in from Mali to north Burkina Faso, local leaders in the city of Ouahigouya organized methods to keep out messages of extremism, including creating communication about new visitors attending prayers and messages of visiting Imams as well as educating the local population around the dangers and fallacies of extremism that does not align with their religious and cultural values. Despite being 35 kilometers from the border of Mali and approximately equal distance from the attacks in the neighboring towns, so far there has been no insecurity in city or surrounding communities.

This example highlights the success of the implementation of local values through African organization. The same can be done with education. Perhaps a positive result can come out of the heartbreak of these conflicts, one in which West African countries seize back their institutions and refuse to be a playground for global wars of influence. Schooling and education is a logical place to start as it has historically been used as one to take Africans away from themselves.

## Conclusion

This paper acknowledges the limited focus, as conflicts are always multi-dimensional. However, addressing what is being (re)produced in the school systems throughout West Africa is a good start to correcting a long history of unnecessary

oppression and conflict. It is imperative to recognize and address the role of schooling in countries, especially during a time of conflict as well as the cyclical patterns occurring in the region. African leaders and governments must develop and display a strong African identity as they lead their people through negotiating with competing outside influences. This was done when Islam was first introduced to the region, and leaders would be wise to start the tradition in current times. It is difficult to limit the outside influences and agendas of Islam and Western (Christian) but with firm leadership and oversight of the education system, governments can balance the competition to limit conflict.

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