

Legitimate Trade, Annexation and Cession of Lagos and International Law

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Akinsanya, Adeoye A.

Nasarawa State University, Nigeria

Akindele, Rafiu A.

Nasarawa State University, Nigeria

Abstract

The paper contends that the abolition of slave trade Great Britain in 1807 was “a product of growing European industrial expansionism”. Indeed, the promotion of so-called ‘legitimate trade’, whatever that meant, as well as the Annexation and Cession of Lagos can be explained only by economic determinism. The paper concludes that the Annexation and Cession of Lagos in 1861 was patently violative of customary rules and principles of international law.

Keywords

Legitimate trade, annexation and cession of Lagos, International law

Introduction: Statement of the Problem

The European conquest of African territories followed the Marxist theory of the relationship between capitalism and imperialism. The Marxists have argued that a stage is reached in an industrialized world where there is a large surplus of finance capital necessitating investments abroad. A basic reason advanced for colonialism and imperialism was economic, a factor which has been hotly contested by many scholars, including those from the rapidly-industrializing West. It was Kwame Nkrumah (1962) who aptly defined colonialism as “the policy by which the mother country, the colonial power, binds her colonies to herself by political ties with the primary objective of promoting her own economic advantages” (Cited in Omitola, 2008). However, Sir Andrew Cohen (**Ibid**) has argued that ‘humanitarianism’ was the sole important motive for European involvement in Africa and occupation of Africa, contending that “the abolition of slavery and the revulsion of slave trade, that sense of mission toward the people of Africa were the first motives at the time of British penetration of both West and East Africa”. He further added, and this is very significant, that

Corresponding author:

Adeoye A.Akinsanya, Faculty of Administration, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nasarawa, Nigeria

E-mail: akinsanyaadeoye@gmail.com

...the process of stamping out the slave trade on the coast and in the interior, together with the expansion of trade and missionary activities which was itself a direct result of the anti-slavery campaign led to a steadily increasing European involvement in West Africa... But as far as Britain was concerned, it was the anti-slavery movement, the humanitarian factor which led to the involvement from which all the rest followed. (**Ibid**)

This study attempts to examine the nexus between the promotion of ‘legitimate trade’ (for example, in gold, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, vegetable oils and minerals) as opposed to the thriving of the ‘carrying trade’ and the annexation of Lagos the cession of Lagos in 1861. It argues that the Abolition Act of 1807 and the Emancipation Act of 1833 passed by the British Parliament, thanks to the activities of the Abolitionists led by Reverend Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce, were not borne out of British altruism but of enlightened economic self-interests (Fyfe in Ajayi and Growder, 1974), and that the annexation of Lagos in 1861 was in violation of customary rules and principles of international law.

Slavery and Underdevelopment of Africa

While it can be argued that trading in human cargo in Africa, otherwise called the ‘carrying trade, may be dated to ancient Egyptian and Roman days, and that military subjugation of Africa as well as the enslavement of large sections of its population was spearheaded by Portugal about the middle of the 15th Century, it was certainly the Portuguese who introduced the Atlantic slave trade in the early 16th Century when the discovery of the New World created increased demand for labour in the plantations. Shortly, the French, Danish, Genoese, Dutch and the Spanish, and after 1560, the English also joined the trade with merchants from Liverpool greatly involved. The consequence was a ‘triangular trade’ whereby England, France and colonial America “supplied the exports and ship; Africa, the human merchandise; the colonial plantations, raw materials” (Offiong, 1980: 85). “The slave ships sailed from the home country with cargoes of manufactured goods. These were exchanged at a profit on the west coast of Africa for black slaves”, (**Ibid**) who, according to Williams (1966: 52),

were traded on the plantations, at another profit, in exchange for a cargo of colonial produce to be taken back to the home country. The triangular trade thereby gave a stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations, they produced sugar, cotton, indigo,

molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners provided another market for British industry, New England agriculture and the Newfoundland fisheries. By 1750, there was hardly a trading or manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular trade. The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution.

To be sure, Sherwood (2007) has noted:

Queen Elizabeth did not need much persuading to support Sir John Hawkins' expeditions to West Africa in the 1560s to obtain slaves. Britain was not the first European power to indulge in this abhorrent activity. But in 1750, Britain gained control of the trade, and in the next twenty five years, about 3,552 vessels sailed from Britain on slaving voyages. The number of Africans transported in British ships from 1750-1807 is estimated as 2.25-2.5 million. The total number of men, women and children exported until 1810 is believed to have been 7.5 million, and from then around 1860, another 2 million were seized and sent across the Atlantic. To those horrific numbers...must be added: those who died in the process of enslavement; those who died in the "barracoons" on the West African coast while awaiting shipment, and those who died on the voyages to the Americas in the overcrowded, grossly packed slaving vessels.

Undoubtedly, London depended on slavery and provided employment for millions of people in Britain. To be sure, while Britain continued to contribute to the slave trade well after the 1807 Abolition Act and even to the 20th Century, slavery remained part of British investment, commerce and empire, especially in funding and supplying goods for the trade in slaves as well as the use of slave-grown produce (cotton). With respect to the African continent, the Atlantic slave trade has its own economic, political and demographic consequences. Not only did it retard African commodity production, it also caused population decline and severely retarded growth. As one observer (Illife, 1995: 139) put it, "the slave trade was a demographic disaster, but not a catastrophe the people survived." As for its political consequence, slave trade, as another observer noted, shaped the character of major states and stateless societies (like the Igbo which supplied many slaves) "in a mercantilist direction, meaning that political and commercial power fused, either by rulers

controlling trade or by traders acquiring political power” (**Ibid**). To be sure, the Atlantic slave trade led to the creation of Dahomey, and it is not without significance that, by 1850, the “strategic value of Lagos as a base from which to crush the slave-trading Kingdom of Dahomey, as a commercial centre and key to the hunterland of Nigeria” (Arikpo, 1967: 3) served as a precursor to the annexation of Lagos in 1861.

Abolition of Slave Trade, and Annexation of Lagos in 1861

The following questions may be posed: Why would Britain wash its hands from slavery when it outwitted its European rivals by fair and foul means and became the premier trader in slaves from the 17th Century until 1807? Why would Britain exert considerable pressure on other countries trading in enslaved Africans to cease their lucrative business? Slave trade was a lucrative business in Britain. Bristol grew rich on it, followed by Liverpool. London, like some of the smaller British ports, dealt in slaves. The specialized vessels were built in many British shipyards, with most of them constructed in Liverpool. Laden with trade goods (guns and ammunition, (Inikori, 1982: 133) rum, metal goods and cloth), they sailed to the ‘Slave Coast,’ exchanged goods for human beings who were then packed in vessels like sardines and shipped across the Atlantic, where those still alive were “oiled to make them look healthy and put on the auction block.” Again, were the Abolitionists like William Wilberforce and those Quaker abolitionists who were importers of slave-grown produce influenced in their abolition struggles and campaigns for over twenty years because of fear of not going to heaven? Or were they compelled to champion abolition because of enlightened economic self-interests? Why would the British Government, with the support of Rothschild’s, the bankers, pay £20million (about £1billion today) to the deprived slave owners in the West Indies, while the freed slaves received nothing “except the opportunity to work for the paltry wages that were... offered to them?” The point that needs to be emphasized is that:

The end of slavery in the Western Hemisphere underlined the practical need for organizing a new regime of compulsions, except this time within newly acquired African possessions. From being a humanitarian impulse, the movement to abolish the slave trade gained practical immediacy in the aftermath of the American Civil War. A direct effect of that war-which rerouted the supply of southern cotton to the north-was an acute shortage of cotton for textile production elsewhere, the “cotton famine,” as it came to be known. (Mandani, 2002: 37)

To be sure, the cotton question had become alarming in British Government circles to be included in the Speech from the Throne.

The insufficiency of the supply of raw materials upon which the great cotton industry depends has inspired me with deep concern. I trust that the efforts which are being made in various parts of the Empire to increase the area under cultivation may be attended with a large measure of success. (**Ibid**)

Mandani (**Ibid**) has noted:

This changing context helped swing important sections of manufacturing opinion against slavery and in favour of colonization, so that Africans who yesterday were transported to the New World could now stay at home-in both instance to produce cotton for the ‘Satanic mills.’

It is plausibly arguable that the economy of West Africa might not have substantially changed inspite of its economic and commercial links with Europe in the 19th Century. But there is no doubt that a very important feature of West African history after 1807 and by 1860 was the substitution of Atlantic slave trade by ‘legitimate trade.’ As Flint (Cited in Ajayi and Croder, 1974: 391) noted, and this is very significant:

The anti-slave-trade movement in Europe was itself... a product of growing European industrial capitalism... That the anti-slave movement was able to crush the vested opposition of powerful trading interests in Liverpool, Bristol, London and the British West Indies was partly the result of new economic attitudes towards West Africa which were growing in Britain.

Indeed, British industry increasingly required tropical goods, dyes, gums, palm oil and oil extracted from palm kernels, groundnuts and benniseed. Therefore, it was, as Flint (Cited in Ajayi and Crowder, 1974: 391) put it,

Stupid [and] immoral for British slave traders to... denude Africa of the labour with which these commodities could be produced. Moreover, British industry was an exporting industry, and men were turning to the belief that the Negro, left a free man in Africa and given purchasing power through ‘legitimate commerce,’ was of more value than the Negro transported as a slave to the West Indies.

In essence, the abolition of the ‘carrying trade’ in favour of ‘legitimate trade’ was borne out of enlightened economic self-interests rather than humanitarian instincts. Industrializing Europe opened an expanding market for lubricants.

Palm oil in the Niger-Delta and Dahomey and oil extracted from palm kernels, groundnuts and benninseed were in growing demand and could therefore supply an export product to supersede slaves. Thus, an observer (Fyfe in Ajayi and Crowder, 1974: 47) can declare with pride:

African rulers or entrepreneurs who could organize a large supply of groundnuts or palm produce could obtain a good market for them. Slaves provided the necessary labour force. The European philanthropists, who hoped that trade in vegetable produce would drive out the slave trade, were inaugurating a new kind of demand for slave labour with a slave trade to feed it. Driven from the Atlantic, the slave trade went on within Africa to recruit labour to grow produce for new European markets.

In a way, 'legitimate trade' in West Africa, particularly in Dahomey, Yoruba land, Old Calabar, Senegal, and other coastal regions rested partly on expanded slavery. Indeed, the abolition of slavery and slave trade impoverished many independent African businessmen, who, because of European penetration into the hinterland, were reduced to being mere agents of European firms. Fyfe (*Ibid*, 47) has noted that substituting vegetable for human produce did not alter the pattern of export trade:

The West African economies remained as closely tied to Europe as ever. Indeed, the colonial economic relationship was intensified. The volume of manufactured imports from the expanding factories of Europe increased steadily, pushing the frontier of import-export trading inland and bringing more peoples within the European trading sphere.

With respect to British and European involvement in parts of Africa prior to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 formalizing the scramble for, and partitioning of, Africa in the aftermath of the Abolition Act of 1807, a decision was taken by the British Government to station a Naval Squadron on the West African coast, partly to stamp out effectively the 'carrying trade' and prevent foreign ships from engaging in the trade, and, by extension, to promote 'legitimate trade.' A British naval expedition sent up the Niger to conclude Treaties of Friendship and Trade with the Chiefs, so-called 'X-Treaties' since illiterate Chiefs only indicated 'X' against their names, to obtain land for establishing farm settlements for liberated slaves. Though the expedition was forced to withdraw to Fernando Po owing to the spread of malaria, three British expeditions sent to Katsina, Kano, Borno, Jebba, Muri, the Niger and Benue rivers to conclude Treaties of Friendship and Trade with the Chiefs revealed great possibilities of trade with the Nigerian interior under British

naval protection. Not unnaturally, the rulers and Chiefs were uncomfortable with the presence of 'strangers' who would not only deprive them of their profits as middlemen but also interfere with their established traditions and patterns of social organization. The answer to their challenge was, as Arikpo (1967: 29-30) reminded us,

The formation of a government-sponsored quasi-military organization, the Royal Niger Chartered Company, which exercised a monopoly of the trade on the river, maintained an armed constabulary, exercised judicial authority, imposed taxes and collected customs duties. The Company performed all the functions of an independent government except that it had not the right to negotiate with foreign power.

To stamp out slave trade, an anti-slave trade naval squadron "undermanned and equipped with vessels too slow, too old and unsuitable for West African waters" (Sherwood, 2007) was stationed along the West African coast with the growth of 'legitimate trade' in palm oil. And, by 1840, Bonny and Old Calabar recorded very little slave export, although the slave market of Dahomey was being fully fed by captives from the Yoruba Wars (Ajayi and Crowder, 1974: 129-166). The palm oil trade was still being controlled by the coastal chiefs who imposed a customs duty called 'Comey', to ensure uninterrupted supply from the hinterland and price stability in the market.

Nevertheless, as the coastal Chiefs became wealthier and more powerful, European traders became more nervous as a consequence of the attitudes of African middlemen, forcing the British Government which reacted to their demands for better protection to appoint Consuls to protect and assist British subjects trading and/or residing on the West Coast. In 1849, John Beecroft was appointed a Consul to the Bights of Benin and Biafra, with headquarters in Fernando Po. The appointment of Campbell as a Consul for Lagos heralded the struggle for the control of Lagos which eventually led to the Treaty of Cession in 1861. It is indeed true that Consuls had no executive authority over British subjects and had no judicial powers over the subjects of the territories to which they were accredited, notwithstanding the provisions of the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1843 which conferred on the Queen's Representative "within diverse territories and places out of Her Majesty's Dominions" the right to exercise and enjoy any Power of Jurisdiction in "as ample a manner as if Her Majesty had acquired such Power of Jurisdiction by Cession or conquest of territory."

The point that needs to be stated here is that the Consuls, propped by British gun boats, came to interfere increasingly in the domestic politics of the coastal States. First, they abused their power to support the exploitation of the coastal trade by unscrupulous 'palm oil ruffians', and when African commercial rivalry had been successfully put 'at bay', they turned to political control of these coastal states. Illiffe (1995: 157) has noted:

Determination to stop the slave trade led the British to abandon their long deference to coastal rulers, impose anti-slave trade treaties from the 1830s, appoint a consul in 1849, create joint courts of Europeans and Africans in coastal towns from 1850, and interfere increasingly in African politics, especially in Yorubaland and the Niger-Delta. This strategy culminated in the seizure of Lagos in 1861.

Indeed, gun boat diplomacy was so successful in coastal West Africa that “when King Archibong of Calabar died in 1852, Beecroft presided over the election of the new king and his right to do so was never questioned” (Arikpo, 1967: 31). To be sure, the Consuls not only ‘supported’ and ‘flattered’ those coastal and Nigerian rulers who championed British cause in trade, political influence and religion but also harassed and conspired against those challenging British supremacy, and this was no less demonstrated than in the struggle over the succession to the Obaship of Lagos.

The tiny Island of Lagos, once a Benin military outpost, and later the most important slave-mart on the West African coast, became the first step, and perhaps fortuitously, in the establishment of a British colony in West Africa. Its strategic value as a base from which to demolish the slave trading Kingdom of Dahomey, as well as a commercial centre and the gateway to Nigeria’s interior had become clear to the British Government by 1850. King Kosoko, the reigning Oba was a strong ally of Dahomey and a supporter of the thriving ‘carrying trade.’ To get rid of King Kosoko, Consul Beecroft met King Kosoko’s ageing docile uncle Akitoye in Badagry while on exile after his banishment by King Kosoko who had ‘destooled’ him. Akitoye was promised his throne by Consul Beecroft if he signed a Treaty to abolish slave trade in the Bight of Benin and promote ‘legitimate trade’ with British merchants. Akitoye readily accepted the offer and in 1851, Lagos was bombarded by a British naval squadron and after four days of fierce bombardment, Lagos was captured. Akitoye kept his own side of the understanding with Consul Beecroft, signed a Treaty with Britain to abolish the slave trade, protect Christian missionaries and promote ‘legitimate trade’, whatever that term meant.

The restoration of Akitoye to the Obaship of Lagos did not immediately bring peace to Lagos as there remained intermittent fighting between his supporters and those of King Kosoko who had been exiled. At his death in 1854, King Akitoye was a mere puppet of Consul Campbell, successor to Consul Beecroft since 1853. Dosunmu, King Akitoye’s son who succeeded his father with Consul Campbell’s support was no less docile than his father, and on August 6, 1861, King Dosunmu was coerced by Consul Campbell to cede the Island of Lagos to the British Crown. Under the Treaty of Cession, King

Dosunmu transferred the port and island of Lagos to the British Crown “together with rights, profits, territories and appurtenances there unto attached” (*Ibid*). He was to receive £1500 as an annual pension and enjoy the right to continue the use of the title of ‘King’, and to resolve disputes among the indigenes of Lagos “with their consent and subject to appeal to British laws” (Arikpo, 1967: 82). Thus, Lagos became a British colony with Consul Campbell appointed its Governor. In 1862, the Settlement of Lagos, as it was then called, was put under a Governor-in-Chief of the West African possessions, with Freetown as the capital. Therefore, the surrounding districts were annexed. Palma and Lekki were ceded by King Kosoko in 1863, Badagry by the Akran and his Chiefs. Addo and Oke Odan were declared the Protectorates of Lagos. The Yoruba, shocked by the annexation of Lagos, refused to trade with the Government of Lagos. Between 1863 and 1873 (Afigbo, in Ajayi and Crowder 1974: 424-448), the Egbas made several attempts to neutralize the spread of British influence in Yorubaland, followed by a blockade of the trade route in 1872 between Lagos and the hinterland (Arikpo, 1967: 32). As a reprisal, Glover, then the Administrator of Lagos, introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council on March 20, 1872 for “an Ordinance to Empower the Administrator of the Settlement of Lagos in certain cases to shut the roads to the interior by proclamation”, believing and hoping that blockading the roads against the Egbas and Ijebus would “cause the rest of the Yoruba to rebel” (*Ibid*).

Annexation and Cession of Lagos and International Law

It has been noted above that the Yoruba were shocked by the Annexation of Lagos in 1861. More reprehensible to them was that the Cession of Lagos was achieved and effected through coercion. Harris (2004: 42-43) has pungently expressed the view that treaties “considered, in themselves and particularly in their inceptive... are formally, a source of obligation rather than a source of law... in this connection, ... attempts... to ascribe a law-making character to **all** treaties irrespective of the character of the content... by postulating that some treaties create ‘particular’ international and others ‘general’, is of extremely dubious validity.” Consequently, a series of Treaties of Friendship and Trade concluded by various British naval expeditions with illiterate coastal rulers and Chiefs raise serious questions about their validity. The treaty associated with annexation of Lagos in 1861, after heavy military bombardment by a British naval squadron, all in the name of stamping out slave trade in the Lagos Island and promoting a so-called ‘legitimate trade’ as opposed to the ‘carrying trade’ as well as the Treaty of Cession of Lagos to the British Crown in 1861 raises serious questions of validity international law.

One recalls that in the Western Saharan Case, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that (i) Western Sahara at the time of colonization by Spain was not a territory belonging to no one (*terra nullius*); and that (ii) there were no legal ties between the territory and... Morocco... and the Mauritanian entity

of the kinds indicated in paragraph 62 of this opinion (Harris, 2004: 207). In essence, the ICJ rejected Moroccan claims that there was political authority normally associated with sovereignty over Western Sahara, though there was evidence of personal allegiance by Saharan tribes to Morocco. The Court rejected the Moroccan claim that its sovereignty had been recognized by the international community (**Ibid**). On the contrary, the Court found no legal ties of “such nature as might affect the application of Resolution 1514(XV) in the decolonization of Western Sahara and, in particular, of the principle of self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the peoples of the territory” (Akinsanya, 1980: 240-241).

In the instant case, the Annexation of Lagos as well as the Cession of Lagos to the British Crown raises serious questions about the British title to the Settlement of Lagos. If anything, the Annexation of Lagos as well as the Cession of Lagos raises fundamental questions not only about the validity of ‘unequal treaties’ but also of the validity of treaties concluded with illiterate coastal rulers as well as treaties signed and/or concluded under duress, deceit, threat of the use of force and indeed, actual use of force.

With respect to the payment of zero compensation for eminent domain seizures by independent African countries for concession rights obtained by aliens from illiterate African chiefs for good of worthless value, the point had earlier been made elsewhere (Akinsanya, 1980) that:

...a decision whether a state enriches itself at the expense of another state or private foreign interests is often a highly complex question involving not only of the formal legal ties but also of the history of economic and political relations between parties. It may be asked whether a claimant state may, in the name of justice and equity, demand compensation from a taking state for terminating or nationalizing concession agreements or acquired rights obtained through fraud or through a combination of force, threat of force, deceit or downright robbery... The ‘benefits’ accruing to former colonial territories, and arising from positions of inequality between parties cannot be used to explain away illegal or fraudulent exploitation and depletion of and damages to their natural resources and all other resources... the fact [is] that a mining concession was obtained from a colonial government or an illiterate chief who had no power to give away the patrimony of the people to aliens of any race...

The point that needs emphasis here is that the Treaties of Friendship and Trade concluded between representatives of the British Crown and the coastal rulers

and Chiefs, and particularly Akitoye, uncle to King Kosoko, were 'unequal' treaties concluded and/or signed under duress. The Treaties were 'X' 'Treaties', meaning that those coastal rulers and Chiefs with whom the representatives of the Crown concluded such Treaties of Friendship and Trade in exchange for articles of worthless value such as umbrellas, mirrors etc., marked 'X' against their names. Consul Beecroft, the Representative of Britain, which was the premier trader in slaves from the 17th century until 1807, and even after the Emancipation Act of 1833 met with King Kosoko's ageing and docile uncle, Akitoye, in Badagry, and promised the later (Akitoye) his throne if he concluded a Treaty to abolish slave trade in the Bight of Benin and promote 'legitimate trade' with British merchants. He readily agreed and thereafter Lagos was bombarded by a British naval squadron and captured after four days of massive bombardment. In essence, force was employed to acquire Lagos in 1861 **simpliciter**. Coercion was also employed by Consul Campbell on King Dosunmu to cede the Island of Lagos to the British Crown, "together with rights, profits, territories and appurtenances thereunto attached."

Article 51 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties which codified customary rules of international law, for example, the Stimson Doctrine, has this much to say: "The expression of a State's consent to be bound by a treaty, which has been procured by the coercion of its representative through acts or threats directed against him shall be without any legal effect." Furthermore, Article 52 of the Vienna Convention added, and this is very significant, that "A treaty is void if its conclusion has been procured by the threat or use of force in violation of the principles of international law..."

Akitoye was promised that he would be restored to the Obaship of Lagos. His restoration did not immediately bring peace to Lagos as there remained intermittent fighting between his supporters and those of the deposed or 'destooled' King Kosoko. King Akitoye who turned to be a mere puppet of Consul Campbell was succeeded by his son, who was no less docile. In consideration for the payment of £1500 as an annual pension, and the enjoyment of the right to continue the use of the title of 'King' and the right to resolve disputes among the indigenes of Lagos "with their consent and subject to appeal to British law," King Dosunmu ceded the Island of Lagos in 1861 to the British Crown. Article 49 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties has noted that "if a State has been induced to conclude a treaty by the fraudulent conduct of another... State, the State may invoke fraud as invalidating its consent to be bound by the treaty." And, as Article 50 of the Convention further similarly emphasizes, "if the expression of a state's consent to be bound by a treaty has been procured through corruption of its representative directly or indirectly by another... State, the State may invoke such corruption as invalidating its consent to be bound by the treaty." Contrary to the argument that it is inappropriate to apply retroactively the provisions of the 1968 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties to the events of 1860s, all that needs to be said is that the Vienna Convention is a codification of rules and practices in the field of international law, past and present, and that it

articulates in clear terms the fundamentals of the ground rules that underscore the legal regime of treaties. In essence, the Annexation as well as Cession of Lagos in 1861 to the British Crown was patently violative of customary rules and principles of international law.

Conclusion

The abolition of slave trade by Britain in 1807 was not influenced by the fear of the Abolitionists not going to heaven. The anti-slavery movement in Europe, including Great Britain which was the premier trader from 1750 until 1807 (when the Abolition Act was passed by the British Parliament), was “a product of growing European industrial capitalism.” The promotion of ‘legitimate trade’ as well as the Annexation and Cession of Lagos can be explained by economic determinism. Slave trade and slavery were inconsistent with the drives for British industrialization. Nevertheless, the Annexation as well as Cession of Lagos in 1861 to the British Crown was patently in violation of customary rules and principles of international law. It is, therefore, understandable that demands were being made by some public-spirited Africans like the late Chief MKO Abiola for reparations for centuries of slavery, slave trade and colonialism on the former colonial powers. If the Allied Powers could demand reparations from the Japanese for ‘aggression’ during World War II, reparations demanded from Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Portugal for all their atrocities against Africans are certainly not out of place (Dawson, 1952; Rodney, 1972; Akinsanya, 1980; Brownlie, 1978).

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