

Title of Article: Civic- Ethnic Nationalism Dichotomy: Untangling the Renewed Demand for Biafra in Nigeria

Author(s): Duruji, Moses M

Outlet: in Ajala, Aderemi S. (ed) *The State, Nationalism and Politics: The Challenges of Nation-Building in Nigeria*. Cologne, Germany: Rudigger Koppe Verlag pp.71-92

Date of Publication: 2012

Date: 2014

Abstract: Nationalism is a behavioural pattern expressed by a close knitted group to promote and protect the interests of its members at the expense of others who do not belong to the group. It is the feeling of attachment to each other which members of a nation have and to the sense of pride that a nation has in itself. There are different variants of nationalism, but Hans Kohn's definition of a more 'liberal, civic, Western' and 'illiberal, ethnic Eastern' nationalism has been highly influential in providing a framework for our understanding of different types of nationalism. Hans Kohn attempted to establish a distinction between the two. He had argued that the idea of nation first arose in countries with strong bourgeoisie or tradition of liberalism and decentralised rule. The new idea he called civic nationalism, inspired millions by promoting the nation as a political community of citizens with equal rights and duties. Central to the new ideology was the notion that every person, irrespective of religion, ethnic or class background could freely join the nation as long as such a person swears allegiance to a set of political principles and institutions representing the nation's values and objectives. A nationalism of a different kind developed in countries with feudal economics and strong absolute rule, this ethnic nationalism commanded an individual's absolute commitment to the nation, an attachment overriding all other loyalties. It refuted the notion of voluntary association and the representation of the nation as a modern political community, involved in and committed to contemporary

social issues. In which of these variants does the resurgent demand for Biafra fall into? This chapter examines the new call for separation of Biafra from the Nigeria federation. The call by groups varying ideological orientation is hinged on a purported marginalization of mainly Igbo people in Nigeria. This chapter examines this agitation and the activities of groups promoting them as well as the strategies of the state at managing the development. It also attempts to analyze the impact of government response on the activities of these groups demanding for Biafra and its implications for civic nationalism and nation building project.