

A critical discourse analysis of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu's *handover message*

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Abstract

The paper sets out to analyze the ideological impact of Ojukwu's Handover Message on the Biafrans as they persevered in the Nigerian-Biafran War for which they obviously were ill-prepared. The theoretical framework deployed in this study is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using van Dijk's (2006) overall strategies of the Ideological Square which associate we with good things, and them with bad ones. The analysis shows that the discursive structures selected by Odumegwu Ojukwu in the speech reflect the ideologies of the Biafrans which ignited and sustained in them the fighting spirit to continue to defend Biafra against all odds.

Key words: Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, critical discourse analysis, Biafra, ideological square, handover speech.

1.0. Introduction

Nigeria was originally made up of disparate peoples with diverse tongues, cultures, administrative and social structures before the West invaded the West African coasts and lumped them together indiscriminately; more for convenience in their mission of economic exploitation than for the unity of the new nation. Soon after independence in 1960, ethnic hatred,

injustice, discrimination, bribery and corruption became the attribute of many Nigerian politicians. Political crises including the leadership crisis in the Action Group, the Tiv revolts, census crisis and others that erupted were poorly managed, and so contributed tremendously to heating up the polity. Just as the nation was on the verge of total collapse, the First Republic was overthrown in a military coup which led to the death of some top politicians, especially the northerners, and brought General Aguiyi Ironsi to power.

Six months after, Gen. Ironsi was killed in a counter coup, and Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a northerner took over the leadership of the country. Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the then Governor of the Eastern Group of Province, questioned the eligibility of Lieutenant Colonel Gowon to head the government considering that there were senior officers in the Army who should have taken over the mantle of leadership. Meanwhile, the killings of the Easterners had started, and continued unabated in the North, and later spread to other parts of Nigeria. Soon, pogroms were committed against the Easterners. The crisis was again so poorly managed that it eventually culminated in the secession of Eastern Nigeria.

Immediately after Ojukwu declared Eastern Nigeria, by the name Biafra, a sovereign independent nation, Gowon ordered a “police action” on Ojukwu and the new nation. He charged the Federal Army “to penetrate into the East Central State and capture Ojukwu and his “rebel gang” and ensure that Eastern Nigeria was brought back to the fold” (Aneke 2007, 123). The task was a herculean one as for the Biafrans it

transformed into a full-fledged war that lasted for thirty months and took its toll on human and material resources on both sides of the conflict (Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2015, 23).

The *Handover Message* was a recorded speech delivered to the Biafrans early in the morning of January 11, 1970 as Federal Troops were making a final push to crush the Biafran revolution. Ojukwu notified his people that he had left Biafra to secure peace for them. Meanwhile, the Biafrans were apprehensive of the future as Ojukwu had stated in a speech on 26th December, 1969, that Biafra may not be able to resist the Federal Troops further. At that point in Biafra, there was despair, anxiety and confusion among soldiers and civilians. Soldiers, though they were urged to 'to maintain their positions', disbanded and discarded their uniform (*Handover Message* Para 7). They, together with the hungry, wounded, feeble and sick civilians sought refuge in nearby bushes as they escaped the Federal Troops and their heavy and continuous artillery fire (Nnamdi-Eruchalu, 2015, 103). There was no food, water or medicare in most parts of Biafra, resulting in high death rates. Ojukwu, in that speech, commended Biafrans for their doggedness in the struggle; narrated their earlier efforts at resolving the crisis, and assured them of an early end to the conflict.

The Nigerian Civil War has generated a good deal of literature addressing its political, economic, and historical perspectives. Literary artists from within and outside Nigeria have mirrored the experiences of the war, each relating his or her own story with a bias (Achebe, 2015, Adichie, 2006, Emecheta, 1982, Forsyth, 1969, Iroh, 1979, Madiebo, 1980).

Biafran war songs and dirges sang at the battlefields have been harvested and studied to explore their themes, style, structure and language (Ugochukwu, 2012, Nwachukwu-Agbada, 1996)). Davies in 1995 studied the “Use of propaganda in Civil War: The Biafran Experience” to discover the background of the successful use of propaganda by Biafra. He discovers that the driving force in the successful use of propaganda in wars are religion, tribal, ethnic or nationalistic interests. As far as this scholar knows, little has been done to study the ideologies embedded in the speeches delivered by Ojukwu to the Biafrans, especially the Handover message, and their ideological impact on them.

This study sets to investigate the ideologies behind the perseverance of Biafrans in a full-fledged war despite the fact that they were ill-equipped and ill-prepared for it. The researcher argues that Biafrans saw their struggle as crucial to their existence and self-determination as a people. They felt rejected, humiliated, wounded, dispossessed and endangered by other Nigerians with whom they had fought for their independence. With this mindset, they took up arms to defend the territory they had founded and which promised to provide all the peace that eluded them in Nigeria. Consequently, they fought heroically in the hope that providence will vindicate them from the better equipped federal army. The study, therefore, sets to unveil the ideologies that underlie the *Handover Message* by opening up alternative readings and interpretations. It is hoped that this analysis will facilitate deeper appreciation of the ideological impact of this and other war speeches of Odumegwu Ojukwu on Biafrans.

2.0. Literature review

2.1. War

War involves the use of arms and ammunition in settling disputes between groups within a nation or between nations. Human societies are prone to conflicts of different magnitudes, but peaceful resolution is usually advocated since war is wasteful. Meanwhile, the aggressiveness of man has made war inevitable. Consequently, The Hague and Geneva Conventions were put in place to checkmate the prosecution of wars and the conduct of soldiers in wars.

War was initially fought with stones, clubs, swords, and spears, but presently, it has taken a disturbing dimension especially with the invention of sophisticated weapons capable of decimating the world's population. During wars, those who escape being killed or maimed by enemy weapons are often confronted by starvation and diseases. Billions of lives and property have been lost to wars of different dimensions in different parts of the world. War causes bodily harms to people exposed to it. It has also inflicted psychological trauma on the people who have come face to face with the carnage associated with it. During wars, human rights are grossly abused. In fact, war reduces humanity to nothingness by taking its toll on everything that complements life. War also has damaging effects on the economy of the nations involved in it. The Federal Government of Nigeria spent about \$840 Million (equivalent of 300 Million Nigerian Pounds) to prosecute the Nigerian Civil War (Aneke 2007, 754).

These words of Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Collins of the Royal Irish Army in an address to his troops in Kuwait on March 19, 2003, just before Iraq was attacked vividly captures the anguish associated with war:

If there are casualties of war then remember that when they woke up and got dressed in the morning they did not plan to die this day. Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly and mark their graves. It is my intention to bring every single one out alive but there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign. We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back. There will be no time for sorrow. (*Eve of Battle Speech*, paragraph 4)

Also, Neville Chamberlain on September 1, 1939 told the House of Commons:

Eighteen months ago in this House I prayed that the responsibility might not fall on me to ask this country to accept the awful arbitrament of war. I fear that I may not be able to avoid that responsibility... Now that all the relevant documents are being made public we shall stand at the bar of history knowing that the responsibility for this terrible catastrophe lies on the shoulders of one man, the German Chancellor, who has not

hesitated to plunge the world into misery in order to satisfy his own senseless ambitions... (*On Nazi Invasion of Poland*).

2.2.1 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that investigates the inter-relatedness of discourse, power and ideology. It is interested in how dominance, social power abuse, social inequalities are discursively enacted, sustained, consented to and resisted in texts and talks in social life. McGregor observes that “our language is not neutral, it is politicized” (2003, 2). Language users while relying on the sociolinguistic features that guide texts and talks in different domains of social life unknowingly accent to manipulative use of language. Such sociolinguistic features are put in place by power elites to help them sustain their position of power and domination in relation to others who often fail to weigh language for evidence of hidden meanings. Those sociolinguistic features are therefore taken-for-granted assumptions that are ideological and so sustain power relations and manipulation. Citing van Dijk, McGregor maintains that ‘the words of those in power are taken as “self-evident truths” and the words of those not in power are dismissed as irrelevant.’ (2003, 2). Those in power have access to discourse and use it to their advantage to control the minds, actions and reactions of their subordinates. Critical discourse analysis targets the use of language to create inequality, power relationships, domination, and discrimination with a view to

creating awareness in the minds of people that discourse should always be evaluated for hidden meaning. In line with this, Holmes notes that “the critical discourse analyst deliberately dons a pair of critical spectacles and looks for evidence of covert exercise of power in supposedly ‘equal interaction’ or indications of hidden ideological assumptions about normal ways of doing things that disadvantage minority groups” (2008, 389). CDA is, therefore, aimed at inculcating in discourse consumers the critical mind to dig deep into the meaning of texts and talks so as to promote good human relationship and social justice.

Politics is one of the fields of human endeavours which entirely depends on discourse. Political discourse is couched in power, ideologies, domination and manipulation, and these are hidden from the audience because they are essentially covert. In politics, the leader addresses the people who listen to what is said, most often, with rapt attention, and without making any attempt to unravel the full meaning of what they are told. Critical discourse analysis is an offshoot of the Critical Linguistics based on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. In the words of Fairclough and Wodak (1997, 271-280) the main tenets of critical discourse analysis are:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological works.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.

8. Discourse is a form of social action.

CDA is an interdisciplinary research perspective that deploys different approaches in the analysis of texts and talks. These approaches have in common the notions of critique, power and ideology. The major proponents of CDA are Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, Ruth Wodak. There are also Gunter Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, Gerlinde Mautner, Martin Reisigl, Florintine Maier, and others. To Norman Fairclough, discourse is a form of social practice, and every social practice has a semiotic element. He is of the opinion that our beliefs, cultural values, social relations, consciousness, social identities, knowledge systems shape and are in turn shaped by social practice. Fairclough's approach to CDA is referred to as the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) in which he pays attention to social conflicts and their linguistic manifestations in discourse especially with regards to dominance, difference and resistance (Wodak and Meyer, 2008: 27). He sees the semiotic aspect of social life as orders of discourse. His approach is based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. Teun van Dijk is well known for his sociocognitive approach in which he stresses the link between discourse, cognition and society. He is of the opinion that CDA should be based on a sound theory of context. To him social actors in discourse rely on social representation, not on individual experiences or strategies. The social representation connects the social system to the individual cognitive system, "and perform the translation, homogenization, and coordination between external requirements and subjective experience (Wodak and Meyer, 2008: 26). Discourse

participants who belong to the same social group share social representations in common. The socio cognitive approach introduces the idea of context models which take the form of mental representation of the structures of the speech events required of participants. To understand discourse, participants have to be equipped with knowledge, attitudes and ideologies. Ruth Wodak is associated with the Discourse Historical Approach in which context is seen as historical. Thus, it lays emphasis in historical analysis of discourse. There are also Social Actors Approach, Corpus Linguistics Approach, and Dispositive Analysis.

This study draws on van Dijk's Theory of CDA since it aims at investigating the impact of Odumegwu's Handover Speech on the cognition of the Biafrans. The speech was packed with the political ideologies guiding the revolution, and in line with van Dijk's assertion, "politics is one of the social domains whose practices are virtually exclusively discursive, and political ideologies are largely reproduced by discourse.

3.0 Methodology

The corpus for this study was the transcript of Ojukwu's *Handover Speech* made up of 760 words on a two page typed paper and downloaded from the internet from the website: www.dawodu.com. Excerpts for analysis were selected by deliberate selection. As a study that deals with the role of discourse in disseminating group ideology in a politically tense situation where a social group, the Biafrans, see themselves as being tortured because they claimed right to self – determination, the ideological square (van Dijk 2006)

based on van Dijk's multidisciplinary socio-cognitive theory is chosen as the analytical framework. This framework addresses the concern of this study adequately since ideologies are accounted for in socio-cognitive terms (van Dijk 2006). Political ideas are more or less conflicting, and are held by the Left and the Right. Political ideologies are therefore polarized between in-groups and outgroups. Speakers belong to in-groups and associate positive values, sound arguments and other good things to their groups, 'us' and negative things to the outgroup 'them'. The speech under analysis exhibits the overall strategies of the ideological square:

- i. Emphasize Our good things
- ii. Emphasize Their bad things
- iii. Deemphasize Our bad things
- iv. Deemphasize Their good things.

Ideological discourses correspond to these strategies for positive self- presentation and negative other-presentation to cast the in-group as good, and the outgroup as bad.

4.0 Analysis

This section sets to show how Odumegwu Ojukwu projected the political ideologies of Biafra to the people using some of the various structures for communicating ideological discourses. The ideologies guiding the Biafran struggles as conveyed in the Handover Speech could be summarized in the following sentences:

- i. Nigeria deprived us of our peace and security.
- ii. The federal army and their supporters are bent on destroying us.

- iii. Nigeria afflicted us with her unlimited access to weapons of war, including the use of starvation.
- iv. We took up arms to defend our territory because we have been pushed to do so.
- v. We are ready to continue to defend ourselves because we are entitled to our security.
- vi. We have limited access to weapons, yet we have fought heroically with the little in our possession.
- vii. We are being killed because we sought the security which Nigeria could not provide for us.

‘We’, ‘us’, and ‘our’ refer to the in-group, the Biafrans who are being oppressed, while Nigeria, her Federal Army and her supporters are the oppressors, the vicious out-group which disturbs and truncates the peace of the Biafrans and denies them the right to self-determination. Relying on these, Ojukwu portrayed his group and their struggles in good light, and painted a bad image of the Nigerian government. Among the structures which were deployed in the speech are:

i. Actor Description: By actor here we mean the people mentioned as having played some roles in the topic of the text and talk. They include the Biafrans, Federal Troops, ‘a callous world’, and ‘some friends of both sides’ (Odumegwu Ojukwu, *Handover*). In ideological discourse such as we have here, ideologies influence the way actors are described. Ojukwu, in this excerpt, portrayed the Biafrans as courageous. Examples:

1. Proud and Heroic Biafrans ... I salute you. (Para 1)

2. Your heroism as a people has sustained our gallant armed forces in defending the territory of our fatherland and in giving

you that protection that we all so ardently need and desire.
(Para 3)

3. Your patriotism has exceeded all expectations and earned worldwide admiration for your fortitude. (Para 5)

The bravery of the Biafrans is considered a positive attribute. The War Leader praised his fellow revolutionists for their doggedness in a war for which they were ill-equipped and ill-prepared in the three excerpts above. He highlighted the viciousness of the Nigerian government and the Federal troops towards Biafrans in the following excerpts:

4. You have suffered unmentioned privations at the hands of an enemy that has used every conceivable weapon, particularly the weapon of starvation against an innocent people whose only crime is that they chose to leave in peace and security according to their own beliefs and away from a country that had condemned and rejected them. (Para 2)

5. Throughout we have made strenuous efforts for peace, taking initiatives of our own to get peace talks going, made compromises in order to get our adversaries to settle our conflict at a conference table. Each time a callous world has imposed a new set of conditions, each condition that we fulfill gives rise to an entirely new one. (Para 5)

The Nigerian government and her troops are cast as heartless, inhuman and oppressive in the two excerpts because they used everything in their powers, including starvation as a weapon of war, and resisted all the attempts of Biafra to get the

conflict resolved amicably. Presenting Nigeria to Biafrans as satanic is strategic in communicating meaning in the speech and instrumental in disseminating the Biafran ideologies. Casting the image of a wicked Nigeria and a peaceful Biafra therefore emphasizes the bad things of Nigeria and emphasizes the good things of Biafra.

ii. **Polarization, Us-Them Categorization:** This strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation is a major strategy for emphasizing meaning in war speeches. War leaders tactfully deploy it to cast good and positive image of self and a negative image of other. Ojukwu's tactful deployment of this strategy in this and his other war speeches kept the struggle alive in the mind of the people despite the huge casualties of the war. Here are some examples:

6. We had proclaimed ourselves a Republic independent and sovereign because we were and are satisfied that only through it can we guarantee our security.(Para 4)

7. Nevertheless, we left the door open and declared on several occasions that we welcomed any other initiative that offers us the security we need. Each time we have said so our enemies and detractors have mischievously distorted our statement. (Para 4)

8. Throughout we have made strenuous efforts for peace, taking initiatives of our own to get peace talks going, made

compromises in order to get our adversaries to settle our conflict at the conference table. (Para 5)

‘We’ in the excerpts refers to the Biafrans. They are packaged as a peaceful people who were being oppressed by a more powerful Nigerian government and her Federal troops. Reminding the people that they took up arms to defend themselves as a last resort and that all the attempts they made to resolve the conflict amicably failed because there was a deliberate attempt by their enemy to annihilate them. So, emphasizing the bad things of Nigeria by presenting her in a negative light, and emphasizing the good things of Biafra by portraying her as an innocent people who were being oppressed unjustly was targeted at controlling the mind and actions of the people.

iii. **Number Game:** This is a very powerful rhetorical ploy used in war speeches to emphasize objectivity and accuracy towards the topic under discussion. Ojukwu utilized it in this speech to heighten hatred for Nigeria in the minds of Biafrans. Consider these excerpts:

9. My government has been reviewing the progress of this war that has now raged for the past two and a half years with increasing fury. (Para 1)

10. You have had your villages and homes ravaged and plundered, your assets destroyed, millions of your sons and daughters murdered in cold blood, and your youth condemned to misery by the enemy’s recent movements and indiscriminate

shelling and bombing of hamlets, villages, and refugees in their camps and on the roads. (Para 3)

11. More recently, some friends of both sides have made proposals for an arrangement with Nigeria that in our view will offer to Biafrans the security to which we aspire (Para 6).

He tactically made reference to the duration and destructiveness of the war so as to increase in the Biafrans deeper resentment for Nigeria. Estimating ‘murdered’ Biafrans in millions, and the destruction of villages and homes and calculated bombing of ‘hamlets’, ‘villages’ and ‘refugees in their camps and on the roads’ in plural terms is strategic in accomplishing the rhetorical intents of the speaker . Projecting the magnitude of wastefulness perpetuated by the Nigerian soldiers against the people of Biafra emphasizes the bad things of the Nigerian governments and presents Biafrans as victims of a dominant and more superior group. Line 11 is aimed at showing them that their government had been making series of attempts to ensure that peace was restored.

iv. **Euphemism:** This is a figure of speech that performs rhetorical and semantic roles in ideological speeches. It is used in the speech to de-emphasize meaning since the public images of Ojukwu and the Biafrans were at stake at that point in the international community. On the verge of the collapse of the Biafran revolution, Ojukwu and the members of his cabinet fled the region to avoid being arrested or killed by the rampaging federal troops. He could not openly admit to his people that

their revolution had finally failed, rather he de-emphasized meaning to hide the truth by stating that:

(12) I shall be satisfied that this venture on which I embark with your blessing has yielded fruit. I know that your prayers go with me as I go in search of peace and that, God willing, I shall soon be back among you. In my short absence I have arranged for the Chief of General Staff, Maj-Gen Philip Effiong, to administer the Government with the rest of the Cabinet to run the affairs of this Republic while I go on this mission... (Para 6)

Going *in search of peace* and *go on this mission* as used in the excerpt all point to the exile he embarked on. To preserve the self-image of Biafra, he painted a picture of going to negotiate for peace at a point when it was obvious that Biafra had crashed. To further hide the truth, he remarked:

(13) I urge all ranks to maintain their positions while I seek an early and honourable end to this struggle and all the suffering it had brought on our people. (Para 7)

If Ojukwu had openly announced the collapse of Biafra and his intentions to flee the region by himself, there would have been greater pandemonium in Biafra. So, tactfully telling them he had gone in search of peace in a prerecorded speech deemphasizes the bad thing of Biafra and their leader and emphasizes the bad thing of the Nigerian government which

would have arrested and killed him and the major actors in the revolution.

Evidentiality: This is a powerful move in emphasizing meaning and justifying ones positions on the topic of discussion. Evidentials promote objectivity and somehow provokes empathy in the listener. Ojukwu himself supplied evidence to justify their stand on the war, especially as he was aware that the world did not quite believe their story. Example:

(14) All this sacrifice has been in the interest and with the sole purpose of achieving security which was the main motive forcing our taking up of arms to defend ourselves. We had proclaimed ourselves a Republic independent and sovereign because we were and are satisfied that only through it can we guarantee our security (Para 4).

This is targeted at emphasizing the good things of the Biafrans who were compelled to rise up to defend themselves and their new republic, and emphasizing the bad things of Nigeria for being oppressive.

Appeal to Emotions: this is also a prominent argumentative move Odumewu Ojukwu deployed in the speech under analysis. Appealing to the emotions of Biafrans by making constant reference to the sufferings they had been through afforded Ojukwu the opportunity to control their minds and actions as long as the crisis lasted.

(15) Your heroism as a people has sustained our gallant armed forces in defending the territory of our fatherland and in giving you that protection that we all so ardently need and desire. You have had your villages and homes ravaged and plundered, your assets destroyed, millions of your sons and daughters murdered in cold blood, and your youth condemned to misery by the enemy's recent movements and indiscriminate shelling and bombing of hamlets, villages, and refugees in their camps and on the roads (Para 3)

Appealing to the emotions of Biafrans who had gone through a lot in the two and a half year duration of the war denotes care and concern for their well-being and emphasizes the good things of their leader. It also emphasizes the bad things of their oppressor, the Nigerian government which had perpetuated large scale destructions of lives and property in their land.

Lexicalization: to enhance the style of this speech, the speaker made a careful selection of lexical items to express his beliefs and ideologies. Such selections enabled him to paint a positive picture of Biafra and a negative one of Nigeria. The speech featured many ideologically positive words like *proud, heroic, fortitude, safeguard, patriotism, security, honesty, courageous, innocent, sacrifice* to promote the self-image of Biafra on the one hand, and negative words like *bombing, starvation, fury, shelling, ravaged, plundered, destroyed, distorted, indiscriminate, adversaries, murdered, misery, fury, destruction* to present Nigeria as inhuman and demonic on the other hand. Another aspect of the war leader's choice of words

is the deployment of many personal pronouns. Strategic use of personal pronouns in war speeches enhances meaning and serves as a major instrument of persuasion. This is because personal pronouns, if tactfully used, are capable of presenting multiple identities. ‘We’, for instance, have different identities in these excerpts:

(17) We had proclaimed ourselves a Republic independent and sovereign because we were satisfied that only through it can we guarantee our security.

(18) If, God helping, we can by this latest show of earnestness secure for our people the end of destruction of your homes and properties.

‘We’ in the first excerpt is ideologically motivated because it is inclusive, making all concerned part of the process, while, it is exclusive in the second because it refers to the major actors in the war, not to all Biafrans. Ideologically similar to the inclusive ‘we’ is the generic ‘you’ which also includes the speaker as a member of the group. Example:

(19) You have had your villages and homes ravaged and plundered, your asserts destroyed

‘I’ was used nine (9) times in paragraph 6 alone because Ojukwu was taking responsibility as the Biafran leader. ‘My’ was also used in the “Handover Speech” to communicate ownership of the government. Laying claims to that position of

authority connotes power relationship and domination over others.

The strategic choice of words to communicate the political ideologies of Biafrans by which they sustained a full blown war from a poor arsenal emphasizes the good things of Biafra and the bad things of the Nigerian government. The choice of words with negative meanings is aimed at portraying bad image of Nigeria, while the positive words deployed to refer to Biafra were intentionally picked to present Biafrans as innocent.

5.0. Observations and Conclusion:

The analysis above shows that Ojukwu deployed many strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation in the speech to cast a good image of Biafra and a bad image of Nigeria. This discursive strategy essentially deployed for ideological discourses serves as an agent of mind control on the Biafrans, inspiring them to fight on when the chances of success was quite slim. War leaders are careful not to cast their speeches in plain language so as to garner enough support for the prosecution of wars. The speeches are phrased in covert language that embodies the worldviews and ideologies of the group. These ideologies take the form of naturalized commonsense, and so hegemonic. No People can agree to prosecute war if they are made to come to terms with the full implications. So, by presenting Biafrans as an innocent, responsible, and courageous people suffering injustices at the hands of Nigerian oppressors, Ojukwu was able to control their minds and actions to his advantage

throughout the duration of the war. He inculcated in them the right impulse to persevere in a battle which they were scarcely prepared for.

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Handover Message

- 1 Proud and heroic Biafrans, fellow countrymen and women, once again I salute you. My government has been reviewing the progress of this war that has now raged for the past two and a half years with increasing fury. It is well that at each stage we remind ourselves of the purposes of this war, what we are fighting to safeguard, and why we are so determined to continue to defend ourselves.
2. You have borne the brunt of the strains of this fight. You have suffered unmentioned privations at the hands of an enemy that has used every conceivable weapon, particularly the weapon of starvation against an innocent people whose only crime is that they chose to leave in peace and security according to their own beliefs and away from a country that had condemned and rejected them.
3. Your heroism as a people has sustained our gallant armed forces in defending the territory of our fatherland and in giving you that protection that we all so ardently need and desire. You have had your villages and homes ravaged and plundered, your assets destroyed, millions of your sons and daughters murdered in cold blood, and your youth condemned to misery by the enemy's recent movements and indiscriminate shelling and bombing of hamlets, villages, and refugees in their camps and on the roads.

4. All this sacrifice has been in the interest and with the sole purpose of achieving security which was the main motive forcing our taking up of arms to defend ourselves. We had proclaimed ourselves a Republic independent and sovereign because we were and are satisfied that only through it can we guarantee our security. Nevertheless, we left the door open and declared on several occasions that we welcomed any other initiative that offers us the security we need. Each time we have said so our enemies and detractors have mischievously distorted our statement. We are entitled in the light of our recent experience to demand what measures are being proposed for our security.
5. The task of a leader of a people at war is to be responsive to the plight of his people, to determine what level of sacrifice can be accepted. Your patriotism has exceeded all expectations and earned worldwide admiration for your fortitude. Armed with your mandate I have striven to apply the forces at our disposal to the best of our ability against overwhelming odds. Throughout we have made strenuous efforts for peace, taking initiatives of our own to get peace talks going, made compromises in order to get our adversaries to settle our conflict at the conference table. Each time a callous world has imposed a new set of conditions. Each condition that we fulfill gives rise to an entirely new one.
6. More recently, some friends of both sides have made proposals for an arrangement with Nigeria that in our view will offer to Biafrans the security to which we

aspire. This has been referred to as certain forms of union, confederation, association, or commonwealth arrangements with Nigeria. Once more, to show our honesty, and in accord with my own frequent affirmations that I would personally go anywhere to secure peace and security for my people, I am travelling out of Biafra to explore with our friends all these proposals further and fully and to be at hand to settle these issues to the best of my ability, always serving the interest of my people. Our detractors may see this move as a sign of collapse of our struggle, or an escape from my responsibilities. If, God helping, we can by this latest show of earnestness secure for our people the end of destruction of your homes and property, I shall be satisfied that this venture on which I embark with your blessing has yielded fruit. I know that your prayers go with me as I go in search of peace and that, God willing, I shall soon be back among you. In my short absence I have arranged for the chief of General Staff, Maj-Gen. Phillip Effiong, to administer the Government with the rest of the Cabinet to run the affairs of this Republic while I go on this mission, accompanied by my Political Adviser and my Chief Secretary.

7. I once more pay my tribute to the Biafran Armed Forces, and urge all ranks to maintain their positions while I seek an early and honourable end to this struggle and the sufferings it has brought on our People. Proud and courageous Biafrans, [noble] Biafrans, Biafra shall live. God bless you all.

Pre-recorded and broadcast over Biafran radio at 6:00am, 11 January, 1970. (Text from B.B.CME\3277\B1.)

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