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A WALK THROUGH POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: EXHUMING LOGOGENETIC PATTERNS IN NUCLEAR WEAPONRY DISCOURSE

Niyi Akingbe
Department of Arts, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa.
Email: deniakingbe@yahoo.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4637-131X

Samuel Oyeyemi Agbeleoba
Department of English and Literary Studies, Ekiti State University,
Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.
Email: samuel.agbeleoba@eksu.edu.ng
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9643-7682

Author -Bios:
Niyi Akingbe is Professor of Comparative Literature and Poetics (Adjunct) in the Department of Arts [English] at the Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, Eastern Cape, South Africa. His scholarly interests include Comparative, Postcolonial, Commonwealth, African, Protest and Resistance literatures, Cultural studies, Music in literature, and the intersection of literature and Film studies. His work has been published internationally, in reputable accredited journals in, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the United States. He is currently Editor in-Chief, *English Academy Review*; Associate Editor, *Global South Literary Studies*, and on the editorial board of *Southern Semiotic Review*.
And
Samuel Oyeyemi Agbeleoba is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Literary Studies at the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. His work has been published in reputable journals across the globe.

Abstract
This article examined the logogenetic patterning of nuclear discourse through a systemic functional and critical discourse-analytic perspective. While scholarship on nuclear rhetoric has frequently addressed euphemism, deterrence, strategic metaphor, and the political normalization of nuclear violence, less attention has been paid to the way nuclear meanings unfold sequentially across texts. The article therefore proposed logogenesis as a productive analytic category for studying nuclear discourse as a dynamic process of meaning accumulation. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, nuclear rhetoric studies, and illustrative readings of selected public texts, including NATO's nuclear deterrence policy, the 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the study identified recurrent semantic trajectories through which nuclear weapons are variously normalized, rationalized, contested, and delegitimized. The analysis found that deterrence discourse often proceeds through phased movements of technical abstraction, agency dilution, conditional futurity, strategic inevitability, and positive appraisal of credibility and assurance. In contrast, humanitarian and prohibition-oriented discourse rekeys nuclear language through consequences, victims, law, ecology, intergenerational ethics, and public conscience. The article argued that nuclear discourse is not only a vocabulary of security but also an unfolding semiotic architecture that positions readers toward particular moral and political conclusions. A logogenetic approach contributes to discourse studies by showing how nuclear meanings are built temporally, clause by clause and phase by phase, and it contributes to peace and security studies by clarifying the linguistic mechanisms through which nuclear arsenals are made thinkable, governable, or unacceptable.

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Keywords: logogenesis; systemic functional linguistics; nuclear weapons; deterrence discourse; critical discourse analysis; humanitarian disarmament; appraisal; grammatical metaphor

1. Introduction

Nuclear weapons occupy an unusual place in contemporary political language. They are material artifacts capable of extraordinary destruction, yet they circulate publicly through terms that often emphasise stability, credibility, assurance, deterrence, modernization, posture, readiness, and security. The linguistic paradox is not accidental. Nuclear weaponry is sustained not only by laboratories, budgets, delivery systems, doctrines, command structures, and treaties, but also by recurring patterns of meaning that define what nuclear weapons are taken to be, what they are assumed to do, who is imagined to control them, and which futures are made plausible by their continued existence. In this sense, nuclear discourse is a strategic field of social semiosis in which language mediates between catastrophic physical possibility and normalized policy rationality.

This article examines this field by asking how nuclear meanings unfold across texts. Its central claim is that nuclear discourse is best understood not merely as a list of lexical items or ideological propositions but as a logogenetic process: a temporal unfolding of choices through which meaning accumulates, shifts, and becomes naturalized. Put differently, rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics, logogenesis in writing denotes the creation and the generation of meaning within a single text. Logogenesis essentially explains, how words, sentences and paragraphs are arranged in a text to establish a logical, cohesive narrative that structures a constructive argument. In systemic functional linguistics, logogenesis concerns the creation of meaning as a text develops. It is therefore concerned with how meaning is patterned in the course of a text rather than only with the abstract potential of a language system or the social history of a discourse community (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Applied to nuclear discourse, logogenesis makes visible the patterned movement from initial threat to policy justification, from weapon to deterrent, from catastrophic force to strategic asset, and, in counter-discourses, from weapon to humanitarian catastrophe and legal prohibition.

The need for such an analysis is intensified by the contemporary return of explicit nuclear language to public debate. Post-Cold War expectations that nuclear weapons might recede into the background of international politics have been challenged by renewed great-power rivalry, modernization programs, regional nuclear anxieties, and repeated references to nuclear threats in geopolitical crises. Public nuclear discourse is consequently saturated with phrases that appear technical but carry significant ideological work. When a nuclear alliance states that the "fundamental purpose" of nuclear capability is to "preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression," nuclear weapons are situated within a positive teleology of protection rather than within a descriptive frame of mass destruction (NATO, 2025). Conversely, when the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons begins from "catastrophic humanitarian consequences," victims, international humanitarian law, ecological damage, and public conscience, the same class of weapons is positioned within a radically different trajectory (United Nations, 2017). These differences are not only differences of opinion; they are differences in the sequential organization of meaning.

Earlier scholarship has established that nuclear language is politically consequential. Work on "nukespeak" showed how specialized terminology can restrict imagination and make unprecedented violence more governable (Chilton, 1985; Hilgartner et al., 1982). Critical studies of defense intellectual language demonstrated how abstraction, technical reasoning, and strategic calculation can create distance from bodily harm and ethical judgment (Cohn, 1987). Constructivist work on the nuclear taboo showed that nuclear non-use has depended partly on

stigmatization and normative meaning, not only on material deterrence (Tannenwald, 1999, 2005). Humanitarian disarmament scholarship further demonstrated that reframing nuclear weapons through consequences, law, and victims has transformed the terms of international debate (Minor, 2015). These contributions are essential, but the concept of logogenesis allows their insights to be reorganized around a specific question: How does nuclear discourse lead readers through patterned stages of meaning?

The article therefore pursued three objectives. First, it clarified how logogenesis, as developed in systemic functional linguistics, can be adapted for the analysis of nuclear discourse. Second, it identified recurrent logogenetic patterns in selected deterrence-oriented and humanitarian-oriented nuclear texts. Third, it argued that these patterns have political significance because they help shape the apparent reasonableness, necessity, or illegitimacy of nuclear arsenals. The article is conceptual and qualitative rather than corpus-statistical. Its aim is not to claim exhaustive representativeness of all nuclear discourse but to develop a rigorous interpretive model that can be extended in future empirical studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics and the Problem of Logogenesis

Systemic functional linguistics offers a particularly useful foundation for examining nuclear discourse because it treats language as a social semiotic system rather than as a neutral conduit for pre-existing ideas. In the systemic functional tradition, linguistic choices are meaningful because they realize social relations, construe experience, and organize textual flow. Halliday's model of metafunctions distinguishes ideational meanings, which construe processes, participants, and circumstances; interpersonal meanings, which enact evaluation, modality, and relations between speaker and addressee; and textual meanings, which organize information into coherent discourse (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Nuclear weaponry discourse activates all three metafunctions simultaneously. It represents weapons, adversaries, risks, capabilities, and futures; it evaluates what is credible, unacceptable, responsible, or necessary; and it structures these meanings into policy narratives that appear coherent and authoritative.

Logogenesis adds a temporal dimension to this model. If language is a system of meaning potential, any actual text is an unfolding instance of that potential. Meaning is not delivered all at once. It is accumulated through lexical chains, thematic progression, cohesion, evaluative prosodies, and shifts in semantic phase. This is why discourse analysis within systemic functional linguistics has been concerned with the relation between text and context as well as with models such as register analysis, phase, discourse semantics, rhetorical structure, and appliable discourse analysis (Bartlett et al., 2019). For the present study, logogenesis is not treated simply as a technical term for textual development. It is treated as a method for examining how nuclear texts guide readers from one position to another.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, and Strategic Language

Critical discourse analysis provides a second foundation by insisting that discourse is implicated in power. Fairclough's approach to discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice is useful for nuclear discourse because it allows policy language to be read both linguistically and institutionally (Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Nuclear texts are not isolated linguistic artifacts. They are produced by states, alliances, international organizations, advocacy networks, research institutes, and media institutions. Their terms are often repeated across documents, briefings, speeches, and educational materials, generating a durable intertextual field in which some meanings become common sense.

Critical discourse analysis is also attentive to the way abstraction can conceal agency and normalize asymmetrical power. Nuclear discourse frequently uses nominalizations such as deterrence, escalation, modernization, assurance, deployment, capability, survivability, and risk reduction. These forms turn processes into things, making policy action appear as a manageable object rather than a sequence of decisions by identifiable actors. In systemic functional terms, such nominalizations are instances of grammatical metaphor: meanings that might have been expressed dynamically as clauses are condensed into nouns (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). In political discourse, this condensation can increase technical density while reducing ethical visibility.

2.3 Nuclear Rhetoric, Nukespeak, and Technostrategic Rationality

The study of nuclear rhetoric has long noted that nuclear weapons generate distinctive forms of language. The term "nukespeak" has been used to describe the specialized lexicon through which nuclear violence is made thinkable, speakable, and manageable (Chilton, 1985; Hilgartner et al., 1982). Nukespeak does not simply hide violence behind euphemism; it organizes a worldview. It reclassifies annihilatory capacity as deterrent capability, transforms vulnerability into strategic balance, and frames preparation for nuclear war as the maintenance of peace.

Cohn's influential ethnographic analysis of defense intellectuals showed that nuclear strategic language can produce emotional and moral distance from destruction. Terms such as "collateral damage," "counterforce," "clean bombs," and "surgical strikes" helped constitute a technostrategic discourse in which participation required fluency in abstraction and calculation (Cohn, 1987). This insight remains central for contemporary analysis because nuclear discourse still depends heavily on technical performativity. To speak credibly in nuclear policy communities often means speaking in a register that foregrounds systems, capabilities, yields, platforms, credibility, and escalation management. Humanitarian vocabulary may appear within such discourse, but it is often subordinated to strategic grammar.

2.4 Deterrence, Taboo, and the Normative Ambivalence of Nuclear Meaning

Nuclear weaponry discourse is not monolithic. It is marked by deep normative ambivalence. Deterrence discourse can normalize possession while stigmatizing use. The nuclear taboo literature is crucial here because it shows that nuclear weapons have been subject to a powerful norm of non-use. Tannenwald argued that nuclear weapons became defined as abhorrent and unacceptable weapons of mass destruction and that their use became increasingly "practically unthinkable" in world politics (Tannenwald, 1999, 2005). This argument challenges purely material explanations of nuclear non-use by showing that norms, stigmatization, and legitimacy have mattered.

However, the taboo on use does not automatically produce a taboo on possession. Indeed, much nuclear discourse depends on a paradoxical structure: nuclear weapons are represented as too terrible to use but too valuable to relinquish. The logogenetic significance of this paradox is considerable. Deterrence texts often move from the horror of nuclear war to the necessity of preventing it by maintaining credible nuclear forces. The same destructive potential that grounds the moral problem is reinterpreted as the source of deterrent value. This movement is not a contradiction within the text's own logic; it is a semantic conversion. Catastrophe becomes the condition of credibility.

This conversion can be observed in alliance and state policy language. NATO describes nuclear capability as serving the purpose of preserving peace, preventing coercion, and deterring aggression, while also stating that the alliance seeks the security environment for a world without nuclear weapons (NATO, 2025). The 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review similarly

combines risk reduction and arms control with the assertion that nuclear weapons continue to provide unique deterrence effects and remain relevant to assurance and deterrence objectives (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). In both cases, nuclear meaning unfolds through balance: danger and responsibility, restraint and readiness, disarmament aspiration and modernization practice.

2.5 Humanitarian Disarmament and Counter-Logogenesis

Humanitarian disarmament discourse has challenged the strategic framing of nuclear weapons by shifting attention from possession, stability, and adversary calculation to consequences, victims, law, and ethics. Minor's analysis of the humanitarian initiative emphasised that the initiative sought to reframe nuclear weapons discourse internationally by moving debate away from theories of strategic stability and toward the impact of nuclear weapons themselves (Minor, 2015). This reframing was central to the diplomatic and civil-society processes that culminated in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The preamble to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons exemplifies a distinctive counter-logogenesis. It begins with catastrophic humanitarian consequences and then expands the semantic field to accident, miscalculation, design, human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, food security, health, gendered impacts, hibakusha, Indigenous peoples, international humanitarian law, public conscience, and disarmament education (United Nations, 2017). The text does not treat nuclear weapons as instruments of stability. It makes consequences the starting point and prohibition the logical endpoint. Its sequential organization therefore contests deterrence discourse at the level of textual progression, not merely at the level of lexical disagreement.

The literature thus reveals a clear research gap. Studies of nuclear language have identified euphemism, technostrategic abstraction, taboo, and humanitarian reframing, but relatively few have examined how these meanings unfold sequentially within texts as logogenetic patterns. This article addresses that gap by bringing systemic functional discourse analysis into closer conversation with nuclear rhetoric and disarmament studies.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework integrated systemic functional linguistics with critical discourse analysis in order to examine both the internal organization of nuclear texts and the social power relations they realize. The central organizing concept was logogenesis, defined here as the unfolding production of meaning across the temporal progression of a text. The study treated nuclear discourse as a process in which semantic relations are built cumulatively through phase movement, lexical chaining, grammatical metaphor, appraisal, agency configuration, and modality.

3.1 Metafunctional Orientation

The analysis began from the systemic functional assumption that every clause performs ideational, interpersonal, and textual work. In nuclear discourse, the ideational metafunction is visible in how texts construe nuclear weapons as participants in processes. A weapon may be construed as a "capability," a "deterrent," a "guarantee," a "risk," a "threat," or an "unacceptable humanitarian danger." These nominal choices are not equivalent. Each assigns the weapon to a different semantic world. A "capability" belongs to a world of institutional competence; a "deterrent" belongs to a world of adversarial calculation; a "risk" belongs to a world of management; a "catastrophic humanitarian consequence" belongs to a world of embodied vulnerability and moral obligation.

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The interpersonal metafunction is visible in evaluation and modality. Nuclear policy discourse frequently uses evaluations such as credible, effective, safe, secure, responsible, unacceptable, necessary, flexible, and robust. Such evaluations position the reader toward judgments of legitimacy and rationality. Modality is equally important because nuclear discourse is often about uncertain futures. Terms such as would, could, might, should, may be required, will remain, and must organize hypothetical scenarios and degrees of obligation. In deterrence discourse, conditional modality frequently transforms possible threats into present necessity. Because an adversary could threaten, a state must maintain credible capabilities. Because nuclear weapons may be used by others, nuclear possession will remain necessary. The movement from possibility to necessity is a core logogenetic pattern.

The textual metafunction is visible in thematic progression and phase. A nuclear policy document that begins with "security environment" and "strategic competition" prepares a different interpretive path from a treaty that begins with "catastrophic humanitarian consequences." Theme selection matters because it establishes what the text treats as its point of departure. In deterrence discourse, the initial themes are often adversaries, threats, alliances, capabilities, and obligations. In humanitarian discourse, the initial themes are harm, victims, humanity, law, ecology, and future generations. Logogenesis is therefore partly a matter of thematic sequencing.

3.2 Grammatical Metaphor and Nominalised Manageability

A central concept in the framework was grammatical metaphor, especially nominalization. In technical and scientific discourse, nominalization allows complex processes to be packaged as concepts. In nuclear policy discourse, this resource is crucial. Processes such as threatening, preparing, deploying, targeting, retaliating, escalating, and modernizing are often construed as nouns: deterrence, preparedness, deployment, targeting, retaliation, escalation, modernization. Nominalization increases density and permits policy texts to relate complex processes efficiently. Yet it can also reduce the visibility of agency. "Nuclear modernization" sounds like an institutional program; "states spending public resources to upgrade weapons capable of mass destruction" foregrounds actors, resources, and consequences.

This study did not treat nominalization as inherently deceptive. Rather, it asked what nominalization does logogenetically. A text may introduce "modernization" after constructing a dangerous security environment, thereby making modernization appear as a rational response rather than as a political choice. Similarly, "risk reduction" may occur after statements of nuclear necessity, allowing the text to incorporate disarmament-oriented values without challenging nuclear possession. In this way, nominalization can serve as a hinge between competing semantic fields.

3.3 Appraisal, Credibility, and Moral Orientation

Appraisal theory, developed within systemic functional linguistics, examines how texts encode evaluation, affect, judgment, and appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). Nuclear weaponry discourse is appraisal-rich even when it appears impersonal. Deterrence texts positively appraise nuclear forces through adjectives and nouns associated with stability, credibility, assurance, survivability, and effectiveness. They negatively appraise adversary behavior through coercion, aggression, escalation, and threat. Humanitarian texts reverse the evaluative orientation: nuclear weapons are negatively appraised through catastrophe, unacceptable suffering, indiscriminate harm, and legal incompatibility, while disarmament is positively appraised through public conscience, ethical imperative, and collective security.

The logogenetic interest lies in how appraisal accumulates. A single adjective such as "credible" is less important than the repeated association of credibility with peace, security, alliance cohesion, and adversary restraint. Over a text, such associations create evaluative prosody. The reader is gradually guided to feel that nuclear forces are not merely destructive objects but responsible instruments within a security architecture. In humanitarian discourse, a different evaluative prosody develops: nuclear weapons become objects of abhorrence and prohibition through cumulative association with victims, environmental harm, illegality, and intergenerational injustice.

3.4 Agency, Passivation, and Responsibility

Agency is a crucial category because nuclear weapons do not act by themselves. They are designed, produced, funded, deployed, maintained, threatened, and potentially used by human institutions. Yet nuclear discourse often distributes agency unevenly. Strategic texts may foreground adversaries as agents of aggression while construing one's own nuclear forces as stabilizing capabilities. They may also use passive or nominal forms that reduce the visibility of the actor responsible for nuclear use. Phrases such as "nuclear weapons would be employed," "deterrence could fail," or "costs would be imposed" differ significantly from clauses that name who would authorize, launch, target, and suffer from nuclear use.

Humanitarian discourse tends to redistribute agency by foregrounding those affected by nuclear weapons and those responsible for prevention. The TPNW preamble, for example, repeatedly expands the participant field to humanity, victims, hibakusha, Indigenous peoples, women and girls, future generations, states parties, and civil society (United Nations, 2017). This expansion is not merely inclusive language. It changes the structure of responsibility by contesting the assumption that nuclear-armed states are the primary legitimate speakers of nuclear order.

3.5 Logogenetic Phase and Semantic Trajectory

For the purposes of this article, a logogenetic pattern is defined as a recurrent trajectory of phase movement through which a nuclear text progressively transforms the meaning of nuclear weapons. This definition emphasizes sequence, repetition, and transformation. It also distinguishes logogenetic analysis from purely lexical analysis. The question is not simply whether a text uses "deterrence" or "catastrophe," but how those terms are introduced, linked, evaluated, and made to lead toward a particular political conclusion.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative, interpretive discourse-analytic design. It was conceptual in orientation but empirically grounded in selected public texts that exemplify major positions in nuclear discourse. The design was appropriate because the research question concerned patterns of meaning, not the measurement of public opinion or the statistical frequency of terms across a large corpus. The study aimed to develop an analytic model that could later be expanded through corpus-assisted or comparative multilingual research.

The analysis combined systemic functional categories with critical discourse-analytic interpretation. The systemic functional component focused on clause-level and discourse-level resources, including nominalization, process types, modality, appraisal, lexical cohesion, and phase. The critical component interpreted these resources in relation to institutional authority, nuclear legitimacy, and the politics of security. This combination allowed the study to move from textual detail to social significance without reducing the analysis to either formal grammar or broad ideological commentary.

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4.2 Corpus Selection

The illustrative corpus was selected purposively rather than randomly. The aim was to include texts that represent contrasting institutional positions in nuclear discourse and that are publicly accessible. Three primary texts were central to the analysis: NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces page, the 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review, and the preamble to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. These texts were selected because they represent alliance deterrence discourse, national nuclear posture discourse, and humanitarian-prohibition discourse respectively.

Text	Institutional location	Dominant discourse orientation	Analytic relevance
NATO nuclear deterrence policy and forces	Military alliance	Deterrence, assurance, alliance security	Illustrates peace-through-threat progression and positive appraisal of nuclear capability.
2022 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review	Nuclear-armed state policy document	Integrated deterrence, modernization, assurance, risk reduction	Illustrates balancing of deterrence, modernization, arms control, and risk reduction.
Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons preamble	Multilateral treaty text	Humanitarian disarmament and legal prohibition	Illustrates counter-logogenesis through consequence, law, victims, and public conscience.

The corpus was supplemented by secondary literature on systemic functional linguistics, critical discourse analysis, nuclear rhetoric, nukespeak, technostrategic discourse, nuclear taboo scholarship, and humanitarian disarmament. The secondary literature provided conceptual categories and historical context, while the primary texts provided examples for the identification of logogenetic patterns.

4.3 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in five stages. First, each primary text was read holistically to identify its major phases and overall trajectory. Second, recurrent lexical chains were identified, especially those organized around deterrence, capability, credibility, assurance, risk, modernization, humanitarian consequence, law, victims, and prohibition. Third, nominalizations and grammatical metaphors were examined to determine how processes were packaged as abstract entities. Fourth, modality and appraisal were coded to identify how necessity, possibility, obligation, responsibility, and value were constructed. Fifth, the findings were compared across deterrence-oriented and humanitarian-oriented texts in order to identify both dominant and counter-logogenetic patterns.

The coding categories are summarized below. They were used as sensitizing concepts rather than as mechanically applied variables.

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Category	Guiding question	Examples of textual evidence
Phase movement	What sequence of meanings does the text build?	Threat diagnosis → capability assertion → deterrence justification → risk-reduction qualification.
Lexical chaining	Which terms recur and cluster?	Deterrence, credibility, assurance, modernization; catastrophe, victims, law, conscience.
Nominalisation	Which processes are construed as things?	Deterrence, escalation, deployment, modernization, elimination, prohibition.
Agency	Who is named as acting, and who is backgrounded?	Adversaries threaten; alliances deter; weapons "provide" security; victims suffer consequences.
Modality	How are possibility and necessity linked?	Could, would, may be required, must, will remain, only way.
Appraisal	What is positively or negatively evaluated?	Credible deterrence; unacceptable suffering; effective forces; catastrophic consequences.
Rekeying	How is the meaning of nuclear weapons transformed?	From weapon to deterrent; from deterrent to humanitarian catastrophe; from possession to legal prohibition.

4.4 Scope and Limitations

The study did not claim that the selected texts exhaust the range of nuclear discourse. Nuclear discourse differs across languages, states, historical periods, institutional genres, and media forms. Nor did the study claim that deterrence discourse is linguistically uniform or that humanitarian discourse is internally homogeneous. Rather, the study identified recurrent patterns visible in influential public texts. Because the article was conceptual and qualitative, the findings should be read as analytically generalizable rather than statistically generalizable.

5. Findings and Discussion

The analysis identified five recurrent logogenetic patterns in nuclear discourse. These patterns did not appear as isolated linguistic features. Rather, they emerged as sequential movements through which texts transformed nuclear weapons into different kinds of social objects: manageable capabilities, deterrent guarantees, instruments of alliance assurance, unacceptable humanitarian dangers, or legally prohibited objects. The findings are organized below as interpretive patterns rather than as mutually exclusive categories, because the same text may activate several patterns at once.

5.1 Technical Abstraction and Nominalised Manageability

The first pattern was technical abstraction, particularly through nominalisation. Deterrence-oriented discourse repeatedly construed complex actions and relations as abstract nouns. Terms such as deterrence, assurance, modernization, posture, readiness, survivability, escalation, deployment, risk reduction, arms control, and employment occurred as condensed policy objects.

This nominal density allowed texts to handle nuclear weapons as elements within a technical system. The effect was to make nuclear weapons administratively legible.

In NATO's nuclear deterrence page, nuclear weapons are introduced not primarily as explosive devices but as components of "deterrence and defence," as a "capability," and as part of an "appropriate mix" of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities (NATO, 2025). The logogenetic sequence begins by locating nuclear weapons inside a broader security architecture. This initial framing matters because it reduces the salience of singular weapon effects and increases the salience of system balance. Nuclear weapons appear as one component among many, and their destructive capacity is grammatically subordinated to their role in maintaining alliance security.

The 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review displayed a similar abstraction pattern. Its recurrent terminology included "integrated deterrence," "tailored deterrence," "extended deterrence," "assurance," "risk reduction," and "modernization" (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). These terms form a lexical chain in which nuclear weapons are not primarily narrated through blast, heat, radiation, or mass death, but through strategic functions. The text's logogenesis is organised around the management of adversary behavior and alliance expectations. In such discourse, nuclear weapons become policy instruments that "provide" effects. This verbal construction is important: effects are represented as outputs of posture rather than as consequences of human decisions to threaten or use mass violence.

Nominalisation also enables semantic compression. "Modernisation" condenses a set of actions involving budgets, laboratories, delivery systems, infrastructures, warhead life-extension programs, and political approvals. Once condensed, modernisation can be evaluated as necessary, prudent, or responsible. The text can then debate whether modernisation is sufficient, credible, affordable, or balanced without repeatedly returning to the embodied implications of what is being modernised. The logogenetic movement therefore proceeds from material weaponry to administrative object, from administrative object to strategic necessity, and from necessity to responsible governance.

5.2 Agency Dilution and Strategic Passivation

The second pattern was agency dilution. Nuclear weapons discourse often foregrounded adversarial agency while backgrounding the agency of nuclear-armed institutions. In deterrence discourse, adversaries threaten, coerce, calculate, and aggress; alliances deter, assure, preserve peace, and maintain capabilities. This distribution of agency creates moral asymmetry. The possible violence of one side is framed as aggression, while the possible violence of the other side is framed as prevention.

NATO's statement that nuclear capability serves to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression is a clear example (NATO, 2025). The grammar gives nuclear capability a stabilizing role. The adversary is implied as the potential source of coercion and aggression, while the alliance appears as the institutional actor preventing harm. Nuclear weapons are thus positioned as defensive signs before they are considered as weapons. The logogenetic order is crucial: by the time the text mentions possible use, employment, or readiness, the reader has already encountered nuclear capability as a peace-preserving instrument.

The U.S. Nuclear Posture Review similarly organized agency around the perceived actions and capabilities of strategic competitors. It presented nuclear policy as a response to threats, coercion, and the requirements of extended deterrence (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). This response structure matters because it assigns initiative to adversaries and necessity to the state. The state does not simply choose nuclear reliance; it is positioned as responding responsibly to external conditions. The logogenetic pattern may be schematized as follows: adversarial danger

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https://cgscopus.com/index.php/journals

is introduced; allied responsibility is activated; nuclear capabilities are defined as necessary; modernization becomes stewardship; and risk reduction becomes a complementary policy rather than a displacing alternative.

Humanitarian discourse responds by redistributing agency and affectedness. The TPNW preamble names victims, hibakusha, Indigenous peoples, women and girls, future generations, and all states as participants in the nuclear problem (United Nations, 2017). It also names legal and ethical obligations. This produces a different participant structure. Nuclear weapons are not merely instruments in a strategic interaction among nuclear-armed states; they are sources of harm to humanity, ecosystems, and future generations. By expanding the field of affected participants, humanitarian discourse resists the restricted agency map of deterrence discourse.

5.3 Deterrence Teleology and Peace-Through-Threat Progression

The third pattern was deterrence teleology, or the logogenetic movement by which nuclear weapons are directed toward the end of peace. In deterrence discourse, nuclear weapons are often introduced through the purpose they allegedly serve rather than through the violence they can inflict. NATO's formulation is especially explicit: the "fundamental purpose" of nuclear capability is to "preserve peace, prevent coercion and deter aggression" (NATO, 2025). This wording constructs nuclear weapons teleologically. Their meaning is derived from their intended function in a security system.

This teleology produces a distinctive peace-through-threat progression. The discourse begins with peace as the desired state, identifies aggression or coercion as the danger, and then presents nuclear capability as the condition for preventing that danger. The threat of catastrophic violence becomes semantically reclassified as an instrument of peace preservation. The resulting pattern is not simply euphemism. It is a complex transformation of value. The destructive capacity of nuclear weapons is not denied; rather, it is made the basis of their deterrent credibility.

This pattern can be represented as a logogenetic chain:

Phase	**Dominant meaning**	**Typical linguistic resources**	**Political effect**
Threat diagnosis	The world contains coercion, aggression, and strategic danger.	Adversary naming; threat lexicon; conditional scenarios.	Establishes insecurity as the starting point.
Capability assertion	Nuclear forces exist within a defensive architecture.	Capability, posture, readiness, survivability.	Reclassifies weapons as security instruments.
Credibility appraisal	The deterrent must be credible, effective, and robust.	Positive appraisal; necessity modality.	Makes maintenance and modernization appear responsible.
Peace teleology	Nuclear capability preserves peace and prevents war.	Purpose clauses; peace/security vocabulary.	Converts threat capacity into stabilizing function.
Risk qualification	Arms control and risk reduction remain desirable.	Balance, reduction, dialogue, responsible.	Incorporates disarmament values without displacing deterrence.

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The peace-through-threat progression is powerful because it integrates moral aspiration into strategic threat. It does not ask the reader to abandon peace; it asks the reader to accept nuclear weapons as the means by which peace is secured under present conditions. This is one reason deterrence discourse is resilient. It can present itself as tragic realism rather than militarism. It acknowledges that a world without nuclear weapons is desirable but argues that the current security environment does not permit immediate movement toward that world.

The logogenetic weakness of this pattern lies in its dependence on deferred ethical reckoning. If the text begins with peace and ends with deterrence, the actual consequences of nuclear use remain largely hypothetical and abstract. The humanitarian counter-discourse challenges precisely this deferral by making consequences the textual starting point. It asks readers to interpret nuclear policy from the vantage point of use, testing, accident, miscalculation, radiation, famine, legal violation, and survivor testimony. The disagreement between deterrence and humanitarian discourse is therefore not simply about whether nuclear weapons prevent war; it is about where the text begins and what sequence of meanings it obliges the reader to follow.

5.4 Anticipatory Futurity, Modernisation, and Conditional Necessity

The fourth pattern was anticipatory futurity. Nuclear discourse is oriented toward futures that have not occurred but are imagined as sufficiently plausible to shape present policy. It is therefore saturated with conditional and modal language. The 2022 United States Nuclear Posture Review repeatedly linked current posture to possible adversary behavior, future deterrence requirements, and the need to sustain assurance and credibility (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). This is characteristic of nuclear policy discourse more broadly: the future is constructed as uncertain, dangerous, and demanding.

Conditional futurity supports modernisation. If adversaries may modernize, if deterrence could fail, if allies may doubt commitments, if technology may change, or if crises may escalate, then present investment becomes a hedge against future vulnerability. The discourse need not claim that nuclear use is likely. It only needs to establish that the consequences of being unprepared would be unacceptable. Through this logic, low-probability scenarios can justify high-consequence preparation. The modal grammar of "could," "might," and "may be required" often leads to the deontic grammar of "must," "will," and "should." This movement from possibility to obligation is one of the most consequential logogenetic patterns in nuclear policy writing.

Modernisation discourse is particularly dependent on anticipatory futurity. Modernisation is rarely represented as expansion for its own sake. It is represented as maintaining credibility, ensuring safety and security, replacing aging systems, adapting to adversary developments, or preserving deterrence. The semantic chain usually moves from future uncertainty to present responsibility. The political effect is to make modernisation appear as continuity rather than escalation. In this sense, modernization becomes a conservative term: it suggests preserving the deterrent, not transforming the arms race.

Humanitarian discourse also uses futurity, but differently. The TPNW preamble invokes future generations, environmental consequences, and the impossibility of adequately addressing catastrophic effects after nuclear use (United Nations, 2017). Here futurity does not justify maintaining nuclear capability; it intensifies the urgency of elimination. The modal structure shifts from "because future threats may arise, nuclear weapons must remain" to "because future consequences would be catastrophic and uncontrollable, nuclear weapons must be eliminated." Both discourses are future-oriented, but they generate opposite obligations.

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5.5 Humanitarian Rekeying and Counter-Logogenesis

The fifth pattern was humanitarian rekeying, which functioned as counter-logogenesis. Rekeying refers here to the transformation of the interpretive frame through which nuclear weapons are understood. The TPNW preamble rekeys nuclear weapons by refusing to begin with deterrence. Instead, it begins with "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" and the need to eliminate nuclear weapons as the only guarantee that they are never used again (United Nations, 2017). This opening is decisive. It establishes consequences, not strategic stability, as the ground of meaning.

The treaty's logogenesis then expands outward. It moves from any use of nuclear weapons to accident, miscalculation, design, human survival, the environment, socioeconomic development, the global economy, food security, health, gendered impacts, hibakusha, testing-affected communities, Indigenous peoples, international humanitarian law, and public conscience (United Nations, 2017). This sequence creates a widening circle of affectedness. Nuclear weapons are no longer instruments held by a few states in order to manage adversaries. They become a planetary and intergenerational problem.

The discourse also changes the evaluative axis. In deterrence discourse, positive appraisal clusters around credibility, security, stability, effectiveness, and assurance. In humanitarian discourse, negative appraisal clusters around catastrophic consequences, unacceptable suffering, disproportionate impact, indiscriminate harm, and legal incompatibility. Positive appraisal shifts to elimination, prohibition, ethical imperative, public conscience, and collective security. The result is a competing evaluative prosody.

Deterrence-oriented logogenesis	**Humanitarian counter-logogenesis**
Begins with security environment and adversarial threat.	Begins with catastrophic consequences and human suffering.
Construes nuclear weapons as capabilities or deterrents.	Construes nuclear weapons as sources of unacceptable harm.
Foregrounds credibility, readiness, assurance, and alliance cohesion.	Foregrounds victims, law, ecology, gender, Indigenous peoples, and future generations.
Uses future uncertainty to justify sustained capability.	Uses future catastrophe to justify elimination.
Presents risk reduction as compatible with nuclear possession.	Presents prohibition as the necessary response to nuclear risk.

Humanitarian rekeying also alters the moral scale of nuclear discourse. Deterrence discourse often privileges the strategic interaction of a limited set of powerful actors. Humanitarian discourse universalises the issue by presenting nuclear weapons as a concern for all humanity. This universalisation is not merely rhetorical. It changes who has standing to speak. If nuclear weapons are primarily instruments of strategic stability, nuclear-armed states and their allies appear as the most relevant experts. If nuclear weapons are sources of catastrophic humanitarian harm, victims, non-nuclear states, medical communities, humanitarian organisations, legal scholars, environmental actors, and future generations all become relevant participants.

5.6 Synthesis: Nuclear Discourse as Sequential Legitimation

Taken together, the findings show that nuclear discourse operates through sequential legitimation. Deterrence discourse legitimates nuclear weapons not primarily by celebrating them, but by guiding readers through a sequence in which nuclear possession appears reluctant, responsible, and conditionally necessary. The text often acknowledges disarmament as an aspiration, but this aspiration is placed within a security environment that postpones its realization. Nuclear weapons are therefore represented as undesirable in principle but indispensable in practice.

Humanitarian discourse contests this sequence by altering the starting point and the order of relevance. It does not allow strategic necessity to precede humanitarian consequence. Instead, it treats consequence as the premise from which legality and policy must be evaluated. This reveals a fundamental insight: nuclear discourse is a struggle over sequence. Whoever controls the beginning of the text often controls the moral trajectory of the argument. If the beginning is adversarial threat, deterrence may appear reasonable. If the beginning is catastrophic humanitarian consequence, prohibition may appear necessary.

6. Conclusion

This article examined the logogenetic patterns that organize nuclear discourse. It argued that nuclear discourse should not be analyzed only as a set of specialized terms, metaphors, euphemisms, or ideological claims. It should also be examined as an unfolding process of meaning. Nuclear texts guide readers through sequences of threat, necessity, credibility, reassurance, modernization, risk, consequence, law, and prohibition. These sequences matter because they help determine whether nuclear weapons appear as rational instruments of security or as unacceptable sources of humanitarian catastrophe.

The analysis showed that deterrence-oriented discourse frequently relied on technical abstraction, nominalized manageability, diluted agency, peace-through-threat teleology, and anticipatory futurity. These features did not function independently. They worked together logogenetically. A text that begins with strategic danger can introduce nuclear capability as defensive; a text that frames capability as defensive can appraise credibility as responsible; a text that appraises credibility as responsible can present modernization as stewardship; and a text that presents modernization as stewardship can incorporate risk reduction without abandoning nuclear reliance. The result is a sequential legitimation of nuclear possession.

The humanitarian and prohibition-oriented discourse examined in this article generated a different trajectory. It began with catastrophic consequences and expanded toward victims, ecology, law, public conscience, and future generations. It redistributed agency by giving discursive standing to those affected by nuclear use and testing, not only to those who possess nuclear weapons. Its counter-logogenesis challenged deterrence discourse by refusing to let strategic abstraction precede humanitarian consequence. In doing so, it exposed the ethical stakes of textual sequencing.

The article's contribution is threefold. Theoretically, it extended the concept of logogenesis into nuclear discourse studies and showed how systemic functional linguistics can illuminate policy language in international security. Methodologically, it proposed a set of analytic categories—phase movement, lexical chaining, nominalization, agency, modality, appraisal, and rekeying—that can be adapted for future studies. Substantively, it demonstrated that nuclear legitimacy is partly produced through language that unfolds over time. Nuclear arsenals are made thinkable not only by doctrines and institutions but by textual pathways that lead readers from danger to deterrence, from deterrence to modernization, and from modernization to conditional responsibility.

The wider implication is that nuclear discourse is never merely descriptive. It is constitutive. It contributes to the social reality in which nuclear weapons can be funded, maintained, threatened, condemned, prohibited, or imagined away. To analyze nuclear language logogenetically is therefore to examine how the possibility of mass destruction is made administratively ordinary or morally intolerable. In an era of renewed nuclear risk, such analysis is not only a linguistic exercise; it is a contribution to the critical scrutiny of the meanings by which humanity governs its most destructive technologies.

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