Nuclear Conviction reconceptualizes nuclear deterrence not as a proven strategic doctrine, but as a **system of belief**—a layered structure composed of psychology, ritual, myth, institutional inertia, and moral narrative. The book argues that **deterrence persists not because it has been empirically validated, but because it is believed**—and that belief serves essential emotional, political, and symbolic functions for nuclear-armed states.

The core thesis is that **deterrence functions like a civil religion**: it is ritualized through posture reviews, war games, missile parades, and euphemistic language. It is mythologized in historical narratives (e.g., the Cuban Missile Crisis), moralized through national identity (e.g., UK’s Trident or India’s strategic autonomy), and shielded from falsifiability by secrecy and strategic ambiguity.

The book draws on interdisciplinary insights—**cognitive neuroscience, behavioral economics, trauma theory, anthropology, and IR**—to show that:

* The human mind is wired for patternicity and agenticity, reinforcing belief in deterrence even when evidence is ambiguous.
* Strategic communities reproduce belief through **emotional suppression**, career incentives, and ritual discipline.
* Nuclear rituals (like launch drills, submarine patrols, posture documents) perform deterrence in the absence of war, converting abstraction into felt reality.
* **Trauma and selective memory** (e.g., Hiroshima, near-miss incidents) underpin belief by externalizing fear and insulating institutions from moral reckoning.
* Challenges to deterrence—disarmament, humanitarian advocacy, feminist critique—are marginalized not due to weakness, but because they threaten the sacred logic of deterrence belief.

Ultimately, Nuclear Conviction is not an anti-deterrence manifesto but a call to recognize deterrence as a belief system with profound consequences. It urges scholars, policymakers, and publics to ask: what would it take to **believe otherwise**—and to build security on trust, ethics, and collective imagination, not fear of annihilation?