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Interview with Daniel Högsta

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Summary:

In this interview, Daniel Högsta discusses his journey into ICAN, beginning as a law student interested in public international law, eventually interning with ICAN in 2013, and now working as an advocacy coordinator. He views nuclear weapons as destabilizing and highlights ICAN's role in advocating for nuclear disarmament through a humanitarian lens, contrasting ICAN's approach with traditional deterrence views. Högsta emphasizes ICAN's unique, coalition-based structure, which collaborates with governments, academics, and civil society, each focusing on eliminating nuclear weapons while complementing the NPT. He is optimistic about the future impact of ICAN's efforts, even if immediate results may not be visible, and he envisions a world without nuclear weapons as one founded on international norms and cooperation. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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Michal Onderco: Hi Daniel and thank you very much for joining for this interview. And as I mentioned, I'm going to ask you a few questions and hopefully, I'm going to hear some answers. [both chuckle] And I want to start with a very general question: how did you personally get to your current position? And why did you choose this career?

Daniel Högsta: Oh, God, I hope it's interesting. I take the second part first. I was basically just studying law at the University of Edinburgh, an LLB, so I was planning on going into law, and become a lawyer. But I really didn't. I mean, when we were supposed to sign up for... I'm not going to go into too many details but we were started to sign up for traineeships. And when it started to become real, like, this is a career and all the hoops you have to go through to get through wasn't so interesting, but I was more interested in public international law. I talked to a professor who told me that civil society, NGOs, have a role to play there, which I didn't understand at all or knew anything about. So, he advised me just to start looking at different NGOs, that I could get involved in this. My internship application landed at ICAN at the time, which is similar in many ways, but obviously a lot of different people then...

Michal Onderco: Which year was that?

Daniel Högsta: January 2013 was when I started. And that's how they took me on board. So, I started as an intern there. And that was right about the time when we were preparing for the first humanitarian conference in Oslo. ICAN did a big civil society forum there. So yeah, I was working a lot with that. And I got my first permanent contract, I think. I had some short-term contracts after my internship, I got my first permanent contract in early 2014. And then in late 2014, I kind of took over the position that I roughly have, in different ways, but you know, advocacy focus. And at that time, when they worked with the diplomatic corps, mainly at the United Nations with, the joint statements on humanitarian impacts at the UNGA, but also the NPT. And then after we got the treaty, I moved into a different role, which is a campaign coordinator. I mean, basically, what I do I work with the ICAN parliamentary pledge and the ICAN cities appeal. In the past, I used to do divestment, but I spoke with Susi, who takes over that work... that does that work right now. So it's mainly those two as well as coordinating, helping partners.

Michal Onderco: So if I understand correctly, it wasn't like you always wanted to work for ICAN, but it was more of a marriage of convenience.

Daniel Högsta: I don't think anyone at that time had heard of ICAN. Like always wanting to work for ICAN? But no, I didn't.

Michal Onderco: During your studies, were you already intrigued by nuclear weapons?

Daniel Högsta: Not at law school, but in my undergraduate certainly, I was interested in the multilateral sphere, I was interested in IR obviously, but yeah, interested in kind of the politics around nuclear weapons. I think it wasn't until I joined ICAN that I really started to... you know, I had done the "activist" stuff in the past, in my youth, but nothing around nuclear weapons. So it wasn't until I started working at ICAN and got excited about the issue from my colleagues. That's when I got into it. I'm not a physicist or anything.

Michal Onderco: Did your studies... before we met, I looked you up. And you did your bachelor's in the US and your master in Edinburgh?

Daniel Högsta: I did a law degree, yeah. It wasn't a masters. It was an accelerated law degree for graduates.

Michal Onderco: So, are you originally American?

Daniel Högsta: No, I'm half Swedish, half English. I became an American when I was 11. It was later actually sorry, I moved to the United States when I was 11. I became an American when I was 18 I think.

Michal Onderco: And when you were growing up, were nuclear weapons something that you found a salient issue, before you joined college?

Daniel Högsta: No, it wasn't something... I mean, if I think back, I went to quite a liberal university. So, it wasn't like nuclear deterrence was taught to us there. So no, it wasn't something that I was really hugely thinking about when I was in high school.

Michal Onderco: Okay. And when you started working with ICAN in 2013, and when you got the contract in 2014. Did you ever want to quit or switch organizations or go and work, in different way, maybe in diplomatic service...

Daniel Högsta: I think working at ICAN, working in the advocacy side, I thought, oh, it would be interesting to kind of do this, you know, because as a civil society organization we're not the ones making the decisions. All we can do is ask people as politely as possible to think about what it says on our briefing papers. But yeah, I didn't think it would be cool to work in the diplomatic service to kind of be on the other side of it as well. But there wasn't really an option that was open for me. So, it wasn't something I really... I never applied for anything like that. I was just too remote from my other citizenship. I mean, yeah, working for the UK and the United States on this issue would have been quite different. Sweden probably also unrewarding, ultimately.

Michal Onderco: So, if you look at the world today, how do you view the role of nuclear weapons in the world today? Do you see nuclear weapons fundamentally as a stabilizing or destabilizing factor the world politics?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, yeah, I would consider them to be destabilizing, and I think they provoke tensions. I mean, just the very existence of them is a massive threat. And I think it sparks a lot of fear in people, a lot of distrust among... between nations as well, that doesn't seem to me to be a sustainable way to predicate a system of international peace.

Michal Onderco: If we had this discussion a year ago, I could imagine that there would be people... I'm not saying you, but I could imagine there will be people who would say nuclear weapons don't matter.

Daniel Högsta: Don't matter?

Michal Onderco: Yes. Do you think that if we, for example, forget about the conflict in Ukraine, nuclear weapons matter in the world today?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, yeah, maybe there would have been people that would have said that a year ago. But there's always been so much apathy around nuclear disarmament, there's still apathy around it today, right? I mean, I think probably you and I both have friends who don't really understand why we're so interested in this topic, or why we find it so important. So yeah, I don't know, I think it's always been a salient issue. I mean, of course, people feel at times when... you know, obviously, there

was the incident with the false alarm in Hawaii, right? that spike is not just people in Hawaii to wake up and feel worried about nuclear weapons. It's something that wakes people up all across the United States. And as well, of course, people ask the question, are we safe? what the hell, what's going on? And I think Ukraine is in an especially scary moment when it comes to nuclear weapons. It forces us to think about the people that have control over these weapons. And, you know, forces people in Europe to ask the question, can they ever be safe with someone like Putin in control, as long as Russia has nuclear weapons, right? I mean, more or less. It feels like it has been scary for a long time. But yeah, right now, is it particularly worrying? Is that your question? More or less?

Michal Onderco: More or less. So there are different parts of civil society that focus in different ways on addressing nuclear risk. There are some like ICAN who work towards elimination; abolition, elimination of nuclear weapons, there are others who work on more on risk reduction. Within the definition of this project, we also, for example understand academics as part of civil society, and academics very often tried to understand, for example, the impact of nuclear weapons. Which of these different ways of addressing nuclear weapons would you personally find the most important and fruitful in 2022?

Daniel Högsta: No, no, I think it has to be all together. I always think about all the stuff that we've done at the UN, it's never just been ICAN, right? I mean, civil society can, from our perspective, or, I should say, advocates and advocacy organization like ICAN can't do it, what it does without the academic community, being there and providing the research on all different kinds of ways and also, fostering the debates, you know, there has to be a debate going on in academia for there to be some kind of tension around an issue which translates into, you know, expertise and knowledge in the field as well. And of course, there's the government aspect to it as well. So I mean, the work that's done on risk reduction, the work that's done on verification, even IPNDV, I mean, FMCT, CTBT, these are all like, super important initiatives. And we all see them as you know... I mean, obviously, we have, we may be pushing a bit more quickly to get to disarmament, than some others who are focusing on other issues are, but I don't think that we're in opposition or in tension with them at all. What's most important? It is an impossible question and we're all equally pushing for the same goal.

Michal Onderco: So if you look at the field, in last 30 years, since the end of the Cold War, what do you think is the biggest failure in the nuclear field since the end of the Cold War?

Daniel Högsta: The biggest failure? I mean, very basically, I think the biggest failure has been that there hasn't been any concrete progress, or any meaningful progress, let's say, within the NPT, on the disarmament pillar, I think it has been the biggest failure. I think there are just so many tensions that arise out of that, you know, because of the 95 Extension. Because of, you know, threats around the world, I mean, I think...

Michal Onderco: So, I think what I am going to attempt during this interview, I'm going to take a little more controversial position. Just to push you. And this is one moment where I think we had someone who is more of a deterrence person, they would say: Well, we have seen France getting rid of different legs of nuclear triad, right? You've seen UK doing that we've seen US and Russia decreasing their numbers of nuclear weapons down to 1500 employed at the moment. Russian and American officials often like to say, we are down 96%, since the Cold War highs.

Daniel Högsta:

And they say 96% of them?

Michal Onderco: Or whatever, 90 something percent. So, for them, like we have done enough...

Daniel Högsta: "We can't go any lower"

Michal Onderco: So that will be the response that they would give to this idea that there hasn't been any meaningful progress. So, what's your answer to that charge?

Daniel Högsta: I mean there are multiple different aspects to it, right? I think we consider the risk to be much greater than they do to, the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the number that they have... I mean, we're, you know, we don't adopt the strategy that there is like a minimum deterrent that is acceptable if we don't accept that assumption, right? There is, if you take them as a whole, the nine nuclear weapon states or the nuclear weapon states under the NPT. Of course, there's been reduction since the height of the Cold War, right? But there haven't been any meaningful reductions right now. I mean, in the last couple of decades, meaningful in terms of actually getting us to a point where we can envision a world without nuclear weapons, right? You know, stockpiles have reduced, but, can blow up the planet many, many times over. That's a problem in and of itself.

Michal Onderco: And what do you think is to blame for this failure?

Daniel Högsta: I mean primarily the nuclear weapon states, obviously. I mean, there's obviously no... there hasn't been political will in those countries for a variety of domestic reasons in terms of pushing it harder. But obviously, as you know, the blame is a bit more broad. There's not just the 9 nuclear weapons states that are complicit in nuclear weapons, it is also the fact that any state claims to rely on nuclear weapons for their national security. So, any state that says that nuclear weapons are a legitimate form of defense, are contributing to the problem. They make it harder to get to zero in a way that, you know, we didn't see for chemical and biological weapons or cluster munitions and landmines. And obviously, you've heard people like me talk about those treaties very, very much, but like they don't have the same kind of web there. And they act as kind of a, you know, the nuclear weapon states, and the United States in particular, often talks about its responsibility to its allies as a reason that it cannot disarm and visa versa.

Michal Onderco: And if you look at the leaders, or if you look at these nine countries, would you assign blame mostly to the executive leaders or to the military complex or all together?

Daniel Högsta: Oh, it's a difficult question. I mean, in some countries, it's all about the executive, I can't compare North Korea to the United States, right? I mean, the United States, I do think, you know, there's obviously... it's a wider web of involvement, the military complex, the defense industry is much bigger and more interconnected with politics, and other countries it's the executive that decides everything. So, it's different for different countries.

Michal Onderco: So what do you think was the role of civil society or academia in this failure? Is there something that civil society or academia could have done differently in the last 30 years to prevent that from happening?

Daniel Högsta: Well, I mean, obviously, the answer is not going to surprise you. I mean, I think that allowing... allowing sounds very presumptuous, but not focusing earlier on the kind of humanitarian

consequences, on focusing on the weapon as a weapon and not sort of some kind of symbol, not some kind of like mythical object, which is often the way that it has been discussed, you know, deterrence theory and around that. Not focusing on the intentional... I mean, I shouldn't say this, because there's been tons of academics who have been very clear on this kind of thing, like Carol Cohn in particular has been very good about focusing on the language around it, and how that's used to abstract the issue. But of course, I mean, ICAN's M.O. [modus operandum] is, of course, focus on like the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and prohibit them through that. So of course, we will say that we should have focused on that earlier.

Michal Onderco: So I mean, even academics who are sympathetic to ICAN's messaging, and the humanitarian consequences, would basically say, well, the first idea is to actually the of humanitarian consequences and sort of this idea of humanitarian impact came first in late...well towards the end of the first decade of 2000s. So Nick Ritchie, for example, traces back two papers by Zia Mian, and Patricia Lewis in 2009. So why do you think that idea hasn't appeared earlier? Is it because people were sort of really concerned about these deterrence effects and whatever else? Or is it because there was some sort of myopia in the field or...

Daniel Högsta: No, I think the reason... I mean, obviously, we are experienced with the ICAN campaign model, it was very inspired by landmines and cluster munition campaigns, right? So for us, like using that using the humanitarian lens was something that I mean, using that as a precursor to a process to prohibit nuclear weapons, you know, as the vehicle towards ultimate elimination, was something that we learned from those campaigns as well. And I think that's also probably reflected, or maybe it was spurred on by the academic field a bit before my time, so I think that's probably why... that's certainly why it was the case for ICAN, they've done quite well. I mean, ICAN didn't exist, ICAN was founded in 2007, we didn't start focusing on, you know, a treaty banning nuclear weapons until 2011.

Michal Onderco: If you look at the field in these last 30 years, and you see the failing, do you see any milestones in the last 30 years where things could have gone differently ad they didn't. But where things could have like really became different?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, me personally, I think that there was a huge opportunity. And with the progress with Obama's speech, I think there was so much energy, and this was way before my time, but I mean, looking back on it, it seemed like that was a huge missed opportunity. A lot of political capital was invested in that there seemed to be a, you know, obviously, a huge economic crisis going on at that time. But aside from that, like, you know, there was a moment of possibility there were countries could maybe work together to achieve more. For a variety of reasons, it didn't pan out that way. And of course, you can't ignore the fact that the US Congress was, you know, not happy about it. But there were big fights going on there, but I think there was a big opportunity there. And I think also the fact that that it didn't go anywhere led to a lot of dissatisfaction in the multilateral sphere as well, I'm like, you know, this feeling that it's not you can't wait for the clock mistakes anymore. You know, other states have a responsibility and an ability to set the agenda at the UN. And if you obviously, you know, you don't think people in the right of the Congress, the United States care about what happens at the UN so much, but, you know, then you go up to the states behave as if they care about what happens to the United States and the United Nations. So I think they picked up on I think that's, without that kind of frustration, maybe the momentum towards the... for the humanitarian initiative. And ultimately, the TPNW wouldn't have picked up so quickly, that's just my personal...

Michal Onderco: We're going to talk about ICAN in a little while, but do you think that for example, if ICAN didn't receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, things would have worked differently for the treaty, or for ICAN itself?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, I think the treaty, the treaty was already negotiated and adopted. I mean, I always think that like, you know, the Nobel Peace Prize, it went to the Treaty and the government's to negotiate it as much as it went to ICAN, there was a whole thing. So obviously, there's a stamp of validation from that institution, for everything it means to different people. For this instrument, and for the strategy, right? For the humanitarian impact-focused campaign as well. So, I think obviously, that helped. But I think the treaty would have... I mean; it wasn't part of our strategy. Okay, negotiate the treaty, win the Nobel Peace Prize. That wasn't what we imagined. No, so I think ICAN would have, yeah, we would have, obviously, we would have carried on, it wasn't part of our strategy, we would kept pushing and stuff like that. Maybe it would have taken a bit longer to get to entry into force, but probably not by too much. I think the support of the treaty was there and evident.

Michal Onderco: We're going to get there in a little while. So, imagine this interview is read by someone who has never heard of ICAN.

Daniel Högsta: Not difficult to imagine at all, many people in my family don't understand it.

Michal Onderco: So what do you think a person who has never heard of ICAN, what should they know about it? What is ICAN?

Daniel Högsta: So ICAN is a group of in very basic terms, ICAN is a group of activists who are committed to putting the human voice at the center of discussions around these unacceptable weapons. I mean, I think in a very basic term, I think that's what ICAN is. And ICAN is friends with governments who have the same interests and with, you know, academics who are interested in the subject as well.

Michal Onderco: What do you think makes ICAN different from other actors in the nuclear field, other civil society organizations?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, I think what makes ICAN different in the nuclear weapons field in terms of an advocacy organization is that we were I mean, we have like over six... well over 600 partners with all different kinds of focuses, right? I mean, we've got a partner in Guatemala that focuses on you know, protection of people who have suffered sexual violence. What connects everyone in or what the mandate of ICAN is, is that we focus we've always been focused on what we used to call the treaty banning nuclear weapons, right? It's our kind of instrument that we feel...

Michal Onderco: That's your sthick.

Daniel Högsta: Yeah, that's our sthick, that's our thing, that we hope will change the situation. And I think that's what we're committed to. And that's what binds us together. And also, you know, the human-centered imperative for that.

Michal Onderco: So this is a question I wanted to ask later in the interview, but since you picked it up, might be a good moment. So you have, as you mentioned, you have other organizations that have different focuses. And very often nuclear weapons are not the primary thing. And they might not maybe even have a person who works and specializes in nuclear weapons, so when...

Daniel Högsta: Why is their expertise relevant to nuclear weapons?

Michal Onderco: No, no, no, no. But since you mentioned it, I will come back to that. But I have a different question, which is if you have these organizations where that have in different levels, for lack of better words, sort of have invested in this field, and they have different stakes of interest in it. What kind of dynamics that create within ICAN? You have organizations like PAX, for example in the Netherlands that has... I don't know what's the situation at the moment, but there used to be times when they had 10 people working only on nuclear disarmament.

Daniel Högsta: Was it that many?

Michal Onderco: Yes, and you have people in, for example, in the DRC, that work on a lot of very worthy causes, but very few of them are directly related to nuclear weapons. That creates a lot of inequality between your members, what kind of dynamics does that lead to?

Daniel Högsta: I mean inequality between the members, I think you could only asses that within a certain country, I mean...

Michal Onderco: Partners, not members, sorry.

Daniel Högsta: I understand what you mean. I think you'd have to set that , like in a certain context. And you know, I think, obviously, there are situations within a country where you have partners, who don't get along well, or who have different approaches, you know, maybe one of them is more aggressive on the NATO question than another country... another organization that doesn't talk about NATO at all right? I mean, that's just not really our job to kind of, mediate between them. Unless it gets in the way of the campaign, I actually think that very few examples that I can think of, like, conflict between partners, unless it's like a personality thing. And that, I mean, happens in the civil society sphere as everywhere. Between countries, I mean, we encourage as much as possible, like, our partners, or anyone we come across with to think about how nuclear weapons impact their sphere of expertise. Which group of people are they trying to help? And what is the nexus to nuclear weapons? Or what is the potential with nuclear weapons? Obviously, we look at countries where there are more vulnerable populations already, that the nuclear winter report shows that those countries are going to suffer more when it comes to nuclear weapons, the use of nuclear weapons even remotely in the world. So I mean, I don't think I'm getting what you want me to get at, but I think it's...

Michal Onderco: Can I reformulate this question? So you have, you have the 600 partners. And I'm under no impression that they all have an equal voice within the organization, maybe formally, but of course, informally, as happens everywhere, there is a variation in how much individual actors are able to influence any sort of campaigning. If you think about the NPT, some countries are more influential than others. Does that translate into the fact that, for example, there are partners able to put in more "person-months" or more men- and women- power into this are more influential than those who don't?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, I think it's the only thing that we do in the staff... of course, if there are partners that are super interested in this and want to want to talk all the time, that's great. Like, I'm not going to say no to that, I'm happy to talk with them. But like, I wouldn't say that that necessarily gives them more influence within the campaign compared to a partner that doesn't have the time to do that. Because, you know, we're just very simple what we're trying to do here, right? We're trying to

get every country to sign and ratify the treaty, like the other parts of our messaging or strategy. It all kind of derives from that. So there's not so many different ways that I feel maybe, I mean, obviously, I've worked for the staff so maybe I'm missing something, but I don't think that there's there is that kind of influence on us, as well. And also, I mean, I think it's also like, right now we're working on like, you know, we have several colleagues that just focus on universalization, just getting countries to sign and ratify. They are speaking more directly with the partners from those countries. And those countries tend to be, you know, Global South countries. You know, who maybe they don't have dedicated people working on nuclear weapons, but they spent all the time talking with them in different kinds of ways. And for me, obviously, I spend more time talking to partners in Europe. So like, I hope we're servicing the campaign, like equally across the board, but I don't necessarily see the bigger organizations as having a bigger influence on our governance. So, it doesn't ring a bell.

Michal Onderco: Okay. So since you started talking about the expertise, that's something I wanted to get to in a little while, but how do you... mentioned at the beginning that when you started working for ICAN, nuclear weapons were not something that was too salient for you. You were not a physicist. You mentioned already, I interviewed Susi, she studied computer science and English literature. A lot of things. The question that I have is basically does expertise matter for being involved in the campaign, or is it more like, we're looking for people who are passionate about the cause and the rest comes with it, on the way?

Daniel Högsta: I think... do you know the TV show the A-team?

Michal Onderco: No.

Daniel Högsta: No? Okay. It's an American TV show. And like, you know, it was a group of like a team... so one of these stupid action shows from the 80s. Very famous theme song. Everyone on the team had different roles, right? like different things to do, different expertise, and that's how it is for ICAN, as well, and that is how any kind of coalition, you know, has to work. Expertise, I mean, like technical expertise on the weapon has to play a huge role in that. I mean, you can't just run around not knowing what you're talking about, and not having anyone that you can turn to be like "okay, well, actually, how far can the, you know, planes from Büchel reach if they tasked to do that?" I mean, so expertise, it plays a huge role, but I don't think expertise as in terms of like, understanding, you know, how nuclear weapons works, for example understanding the theory of deterrence, It can't be the only thing that is in the campaign. It shouldn't deter people from wanting to get involved in campaigning against the cause that we see as, also being an issue of justice as well. So... and I think that's one thing we do try to do very much through our, if you've seen our kind of social media or digital campaigns, it's like very much trying to lower the barrier of entry into this topic. I mean, we're framing... ultimately, we do, bring it down to like, are nuclear weapons good or bad? I mean, in a way, that's what the treaty does, right? Do you think nuclear weapons are good or bad? And I know...

Michal Onderco: This is exactly the sentence that Susi told me. Exactly.

Daniel Högsta: Well, yeah, I mean, we've talked about it many, many times. Beatrice mentioned it as well, I'm sure she'll say the same thing. I mean, are nuclear weapons good or bad. And anyone can have a role in answering that question. You know, and it's effective. It's effective in terms of getting people involved, obviously, it annoys, you know, people who are steeped in deterrence, if you like, it's a much, more complicated question.

Michal Onderco: So if you are, let's say you're hiring a new colleague, or a new intern, or someone for the office, how important is it that they know, for example... you know, that they are versed in the details of the political discussions about nuclear weapons? They are versed in any of the technical details relating to nuclear weapons, or is that not at all a part of the...

Daniel Högsta: No, I mean, I think there has to be the willingness to I mean, I don't think any part of the organization you cannot be fundamentally interested in, you know, some kind of, you know, some things about nuclear weapons or but I think everyone has different roles in the campaign. I mean, my colleague, Alicia is our policy and research director, obviously, she has a lot more knowledge about, you know, the ins and outs of, you know, theory and, you know, technical aspects, than what I do. We all, you know, have this crash course. When you join if you don't have that already in these kinds of topics as well. So, I think it's important, but it's not a prerequisite to joining any position.

Michal Onderco: If you look at ICAN, within the broad field of civil society that works on nuclear weapons, how would you evaluate the relative position of ICAN within that ecosystem?

Daniel Högsta: Oh, God. I thought... I would be really interested to hear your thoughts on that. I don't know. I mean, I think I think we are. You know, I think we make a difference at the UN. I think we make a lot of noise there. And I think we have an influence there, on governments in some way. In the terms of the nuclear weapons ecosphere, I don't know. I don't know...

Michal Onderco: Civil society sphere, not...

Daniel Högsta: Well, I mean, yeah, I mean, I guess it's hard because like, you know, at ICAN we have 650 partner organizations. So I mean, a lot of those are, you know, we were just a coalition. So I mean, a lot of those other are, you know, like the Center for Feminist Foreign Policy in Germany as well. I mean, they occupy lots of other places in the sphere, but they're also a partner of ICAN, in a way. So, I don't know.

Michal Onderco: So, I had coffee this morning with a friend who wrote 10 years ago, a paper on civil society and nuclear weapons. And in that paper, 10 years ago, she wrote about NGOs. And if you look at those names, they don't appear at all in the speakers list of the NPT Review Conference, or the TPNW Meeting of state parties anymore.

Daniel Högsta: Oh wow

Michal Onderco: And I asked her why that was the case. And she said, "well, ICAN put a blanket on all of them, and those who were not under the ICAN blanket, were signed out". And that it basically... ICAN today is basically, as an organization, sort of the hegemonic voice on disarmament in civil society...

Daniel Högsta: Disarmament, not just nuclear disarmament?

Michal Onderco: Well, nuclear disarmament. So that will be an assessment that you will fundamentally disagree with?

Daniel Högsta: Well, I would definitely disagree with the fact that we sucked out, or how did you say? We sucked out the voice... we made it impossible to be in the field. I would disagree with that. Because I mean, there are lots of other NGOs out there who don't share our approach. And, you know, even when we were... I mean, I'm not sure. Maybe it's like, I mean, rather than ICAN maybe what she means

is that, like, the fact that the TPNW became the most popular topic within the nuclear disarmament sphere. And, of course, you know, ICAN had a role to play in that. But I mean, it's hard to think ... it's a bit unfair to blame like ICAN, you know, if other organizations didn't manage to stick around because of the focus on the TPNW. I mean, it's not like we forced any organization, to work on this as well. Yeah, it's an interesting question.

Michal Onderco: And how do you, so if you... you mentioned already, that there are different actors that you work with? And you mentioned already that, for example, there is a role to play for the academics and think tanks. In your work in your daily work, can you tell me more about your work with these other actors, so the role and the importance that the academia for example, has, or the think tanks? And maybe, if you can, mention some of the names of the organizations that you find most important to work with, or even individuals if there are individuals who are particularly important.

Daniel Högsta: Obviously the granular detail of academic work on, you know, we can't use, obvious always in that ... academia, but of course, very reliant, especially when we make the case that, you know, the TPNW is not meant to, you know, it's not something that NATO states cannot join, right? I mean, obviously, we rely on like, you know, legal expertise and political expertise about how NATO developed in the way it did. There were instances in the past where there have been divergences of opinion within NATO, among NATO member states, that somehow didn't threaten the Alliance. So to make that case, obviously, there's research that's being done out there that is that is helpful in that regard. I mean, I think Chatham House has done a lot of work. I mean, you know, analyzing the treaty from both sides of that perspective, which has been very useful. And I mean, UNIDIR has been really, really useful in the past on that as well. So, folks in the humanitarian impact, of course, and also they did this inter... it's called cross-departmental study among UN agencies in 2013, or 14, I think, on response capacities, is really useful as well. So, I mean, we...

Michal Onderco: When I interviewed, Rebecca Johnson, some few weeks ago, and in that interview, she said that in those days in 2013, 14, UNIDIR, especially when John Borrie worked there, that there was very close cooperation, and that basically... they were a de facto part of the campaign.

Daniel Högsta: Were they a part of the campaign? I mean, I think I know what she means. I mean, we were they did a lot of work on. I think John in particular had, because he was a diplomat during the CCM days. And he had written a book called "Viewing nuclear weapons through a humanitarian lens" that he wrote that pamphlet for UNIDIR, which was very useful. And then he also wrote a book on... it was the cluster munitions book. And that was, I think, very inspirational to a lot of us who are working, and ICAN, you know, to really see like, Okay, this is how the campaign that banned cluster munitions did their work, and this is how they interacted with others in their field. And also, you know, "Viewing nuclear weapons through humanitarian lens" was very, was, you know, very inspirational for our strategy of how to use the humanitarian arguments, you know, to make the case for a new legal instrument as well. I mean, John definitely wasn't part of the campaign, he was at UNIDIR.

Michal Onderco: And when you sort of mentioned that there is also academic work, for example, on NATO, and the role and importance of nuclear weapons within NATO. Does ICAN, for example, go out to academics and for example commission studies, or is it more that you find this as a symbiotic relationship?

Daniel Högsta: Commissioned studies? I have to ask Alicia I don't think that we commissioned studies. I mean, we did we do have a program of academic grants that we, that we give, but Alicia would have to tell you more about that.

Michal Onderco: Could I reach out to her?

Daniel Högsta: Of course, yeah. No, it's a collaborative thing as well. I mean, I don't think we've commissioned anything. But I mean, like, obviously ...you know the Norwegian Academy of International Law? So, they published this thing about the TPNW. I don't know the name, but it was like "Myths about the TPNW" and stuff like that. And so they asked us like, what are the things that you hear about TPNW? I think that has asked a lot of people like what are the things that you're hearing about the TPNW? So, then we will contribute to that. Obviously, we weren't involved in the drafting or anything like that.

Michal Onderco: So for example, a few of the ICAN people on social media every now and then tweet the article by Kjolv Egeland on the importance of nuclear weapons within NATO.

Daniel Högsta: Yeah, what's it called? I know which one you mean.

Michal Onderco: I don't... I'm really bad with titles and names...

Daniel Högsta: You don't make it easy in academia with titles.

Michal Onderco: And that paper, for example, very clearly says while nuclear weapons they were not always thought of... NATO was not always a nuclear alliance.

Daniel Högsta: "Sharing nuclear burden" was the name.

Michal Onderco: Would this be the type of work that sort of comes out from this collaborative relationship?

Daniel Högsta: No, I don't think that came out from the collaborative relationship. I don't think...

Michal Onderco: But it does help in the campaign afterwards.

Daniel Högsta: Certainly, it's research that we think you know, makes the case for why NATO shouldn't be scared of the TPNW or why certain NATO countries shouldn't be worried about joining us.

Michal Onderco: Okay. Are there any think tanks, beyond Chatham House, you would find it useful to engage and work with?

Daniel Högsta: It's all just like individuals, right? I mean, I don't think there's any think tanks per se... I mean, I mentioned Chatham House and UNIDIR, because they have that kind of like, you know, respect, like everything, you know... And of course, there's lots of other think tanks that are equally respected and stuff like that. But I don't think it's the research that comes out of that. It's whatever is written there. That has been good. And of course, you know, Benoit Pelopidas at Sciences Po in Paris. But the institute I don't remember how they are called, but I mean, they do a lot of work on

Michal Onderco: You mean the Nuclear Knowledges program?

Daniel Högsta: Yeah, Nuclear Knowledges, right. And he's written stuff on the, you know, the luck is a factor. You know, in his research, I mean we had nothing...I didn't know this coming up before he did it. But obviously, that is really kind of useful stuff to use in campaigns.

Michal Onderco: So can you...this is also for the sort of, posterity and future readers of our interview.

Daniel Högsta: [chuckles] Hello everyone

Michal Onderco: Can you walk me through how, for example, a piece of academic research, like Benoit's paper on luck, how that gets into campaign?

Daniel Högsta: I think you're just speaking, um, this isn't a single case, I'm thinking about hypothetically speaking...

Michal Onderco: Okay, so let's say there is a...that you wake up in the morning, start scrolling Twitter, and you find a paper that you find useful, how does that paper make its way into the campaign?

Daniel Högsta: It's going to be very indirect, right? I mean, it's not like we're going to start a new kind of initiative based on a paper, right? I mean, it could be something like, you know, if there's a particularly relevant piece of research that really just fits perfectly into the work that we're doing with parliamentarians, we would probably circulate it to parliamentarians that are part of the parliamentary pledge, right? But I mean, that's never that kind of spot-on and stuff like that. I think, in general, I kind of just, you know, as everything does, you know, the literature that's out there, makes its way, maybe it sparks some conversations at the desk. Maybe it comes up at some, you know, roundtable meeting that we're at or maybe a diplomat is particularly interested in what someone has written on verification, to be able to include that in the MSP discussions and stuff like that. But it's not... it's never going to be linear.

Michal Onderco: Yeah. So for example, in MSP there was there discussion about this paper, and it was done by Moritz Kutt and Zia Mian on the verification. And even some countries referenced with paper their statement. Is that the sort of nice example of how academic work can sort of land in the campaign or...

Daniel Högsta: Certainly, I think governments were consulting with, you know, Zia and Moritz, you know, and Princeton was the as you know, colleagues at Princeton have done a lot of work on that in the past as well. So certainly, that advises, you know, the work that we're doing, in terms of spreading that understanding, because it is very technical and spreading that understanding among, among diplomats, certainly, we would reference that. And then also try to summarize and break it down for delegations and individual meetings and stuff like that.

Michal Onderco: And in the papers like this, because you said at the beginning, very often when these papers come out, we don't know about this before. Does it ever happen that you are, for example, consulted on the paper before it comes out? Like how is this going to look or is this useful or...

Daniel Högsta: I don't think so. Not like, not like an academic peer-reviewed paper. Surely, they wouldn't...Does that happen? No, I don't think I mean, so if there was like, you know, maybe there's something more like an article that was going to come out, like an op-ed and then maybe we get a heads up about it or like, or what do you think about this?

Michal Onderco: So, I know that sometimes what academics do is they do for a peer-reviewed papers published, they do sort of around and they present the paper at different institutions and sometimes they end up presenting the paper, at a lunch seminar at a ministry for example, and so those sorts of things do happen or not?

Daniel Högsta: No, I mean, that sounds familiar in terms of like, I know that that's how it works. I think, you know, we have been part of like a symposium or something like that, where we were also asked to, you know, contribute some writing and stuff like that. And obviously, like, people share their papers around. So yeah, so in that way.

There's been a little bit but yeah, there's always seemed quite, there was always quite short, like, no longer pieces. I mean, the one that I think, you know, the myths and misconceptions, paper by [the Norwegian Academy] is the only example I can think of where, you know, we were asked like, you know, other things are the arguments that you think need to be covered here that are that are missing, you know? And then obviously, we didn't help to answer them. We just said like, oh, yeah, we've heard that, you know, we should definitely focus on a misconception about safeguards and keeping that.

Michal Onderco: You mentioned already twice the work and parliamentary pledge and the work with parliamentarians. One of the things sometimes people mentioned about the difficulty of working with people in legislative bodies, whether it's parliamentarians or their aides, is that they have often very little attention, and very short... that they care about things only when they're silent. So you know, when there is holding the parliament or something like this. Can you tell me if that is the case, or you might tell me that I'm completely wrong. How do you work with them and try to create change?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, obviously, that's true. I mean, I don't think that necessarily is a negative thing. Right? I mean, like...

Michal Onderco: I mean, I agree that they are busy people. Yeah, I don't see this as something that detracts from...

Daniel Högsta: Yeah, no, no. I mean, first of all, I mean, we have to identify the parliamentarians that are most interested in this issue that wants to speak about this long time. Maybe they, you know, have some kind of personal experience, that they have personal expertise that they think is relevant. So obviously, we try to identify who those individuals are, insofar as we can. And I should say we, I mean, it's not just me. I mean, our partner organizations are the ones who are doing this work. Like, I don't, you know, other than what I hear from them, I don't know, have particular insight into the Dutch, political, you know, parliamentary system or the Belgium one. But, yes, we identify them. And, you know, we try to work, you know, there's a thing I'm sure you saw, or maybe you saw the Labour Party platform in Norway as well, it was something that we worked very hard to get a resolution in there to kind of commit the party, and then hopefully, that makes it easier down the line for party members, parliamentarians to, you know, feel comfortable. Okay, we've got a party decision this week, this is how we go.

Michal Onderco: So there was, for example, recently a discussion about Australia. The current Australian ruling party had actually provisioned in the electoral manifesto that they want to sign and ratify the treaty. Was that also something where ICAN was involved in sort of drafting the party manifesto? Well, drafting isn't putting the letters in, but in a sort of lobbying the party for including it?

Daniel Högsta: Yeah, I mean, yeah, we were involved in that. I mean, we have partners in Australia. They've been working for a long time with different political parties. And, you know, Anthony Albanese signed the parliamentary pledge in the past as well. So I mean, they have been working with them. Of course, they targeted the party congress as an opportunity to make a difference. But yeah, I don't think, definitely didn't draft. That's not possible. But, but certainly pushing to make sure that the

Labour has a strong commitment, an equivocal equip commitment to the TPNW was a big thing. But obviously, you see as well, that in that party commitment, there is some language there that some people I've been trying to use as kind of a qualification. So obviously, you know, it's a bit of give and take.

Michal Onderco: There was an interesting sentence, half sentence, that you said that ICAN always work through domestic partners in working with countries. Can you tell me more about the coordination within ICAN between sort of the central office and the partners on the ground?

Daniel Högsta: Sure. I mean, it's mainly email-based. I mean, I can speak for myself. Every month we'll have a call with our... I mean, I will have a call with the campaigners who were mainly Europe, some other countries, but mainly European partners, where we just talked about the certain, you know, objectives that come up. So last month, we were particularly interested in the UNGA resolutions, of course; Australia was the one that we were happy about, you know, obviously disappointed with Sweden and Finland, and disappointed that we didn't get any other changes as well. So that was something that we focused on, as well. But mainly we're just tracking, you know, if there's a motion that's coming up, we're going to speak with our partners about that. I mean, obviously, with the observer question at the MSP, you know, that was something that we were in touch over email and phone calls, a lot trying to see if we could get Netherlands and Belgium across the line at last second. And you know, the stars aligned politically.

Michal Onderco: So, for example, in the decision, and you mentioned the Netherlands. So if you look that there is for example, the opportunity, if there is a debate that could for example get the country to attend MSP. If it's not about spilling the secret sauce, how do you go about sort of attracting that sort of...

Daniel Högsta: I would just, I mean, usually would come the other direction, they would say, like, oh, I think there might be opportunity here.

Michal Onderco: This is the partner within the country?

Daniel Högsta: Yes, the partner within the country, I mean, so we have several partners in the Netherlands, I mean, some are more active on these kinds of things, and others work on education, stuff, which is fine. So they don't get too involved in the, in the parliamentary lobbying, but I mean, basically, you know, if, if I was to say, okay, can we get a country to observe, you know, you send an email to all the partners, and have a discussion to see what's possible, and who can do what.

Michal Onderco: And then you get an email from, I don't know, PAX for example probably in the Netherlands, saying, we think this is possible. And then the lobbying on the ground, is that done by the local partner? Because my own background is a study of diplomacy, when states want to lobby other countries, at the end of the day, if you really want to push someone to do something, you get, you know, a prime minister or a president pick up the phone and call their counterpart and say, "hey, here's what we want"

Daniel Högsta: I wish we could do that

Michal Onderco: But for me, it would be, for example, that fact of picking up the phone and calling the Dutch parliamentarian saying, "Hey, you should..."

Daniel Högsta: I mean, it's the local partner that has the contacts. I mean, and that would do that kind of work. I mean, sometimes it might be useful. I mean, we like we went to visit Belgium earlier this year. And yeah, and then, you know, Beatrice, and I went, and we had an event of the parliament as well. So in that case, in that way, like, you know...

Michal Onderco: and that sort of thing, is it at the invitation of the local parliamentary party, or is it an invitation of the caucus, is it an invitation of the Foreign Affairs Committee or...?

Daniel Högsta: So, this is the partner, the ICAN partner that will, you know, propose it. And, you know, in that event, I think it was, if I remember correctly, that was it the Greens that... I think it was the Greens that sponsored that debate, and then they work together and making inviting other parliamentarians to come to come in and speak there as well. So yeah, usually, I mean, I think, in most countries, an individual parliamentarian requests that kind of thing. It's not super complicated.

Michal Onderco: So, I want to move on to the last block. Before we go there, I have one last question, which is something... I want to partially return back to the discussion about the academics. There are some academics who, for example, are supportive of the TPNW and see a lot of promise in ICAN's activities. But they go for example further than ICAN and they, for example, argue for mass defection from NPT and you know, like, we don't need a NPT, we have the TPNW and so on so forth. Would you say that this is something that is that sort of "it's a train that passes by and you don't see" or do you see that as damaging to the campaign, or...

Daniel Högsta: I think I know what you're alluding to, which paper you're alluding to...

Michal Onderco: There is not a single paper, there is a series of papers like that by different authors.

Daniel Högsta: I think the thing that's most notable about that is how, like, I mean, there's going to be debate in academia, and we can't be responsible for.

Michal Onderco: And I don't hold you responsible for it.

Daniel Högsta: But I mean, I think what's interesting is, I mean, basically, just to see the how it's used by people who are already skeptical of the TPNW to, you know, to say, this is ICAN's secret agenda, or that we're all TPNW supporters of the same methods like that we have to be, you know, we have to justify ourselves or whatever. But otherwise, I mean practically it doesn't make a difference at all.

I think we've been very clear about how we see the NPT and how important it is for the TPNW, for the NPT to be to be seen as complementary and mutually supportive and how we're not threatening to the NPT. Because, you know, if we were to do that there wouldn't be a single state to support us, right? And nor do we think that would be the right thing to do strategically to get to nuclear disarmament. But of course, yeah, it is a bit of work to kind of reassure... not reassure, but to provide the arguments about why the TPNW and the NPT are complementary, right? And sometimes there might be something that comes up and says, like, oh, you know, I've heard that the TPNW is undercutting the NPT. How do I respond to that? And then maybe some there might be, you know, like, the Bundestag Research Services report, this has been very useful in terms of, you know, making that case, a case for us.

Michal Onderco: And so, for example, I wrote a paper last year, comparing these different reviews of TPNW in Europe. And the Bundestag report is quite different from reports that came up in different...

Daniel Högsta: Was it commissioned, though? I don't think it was. I don't think it was commissioned. And I mean, it was one report. Yeah. I don't think it wasn't commissioned by the government in the same way that the Swedish...

Michal Onderco: No, it was.... I think was written at the request of the Committee on disarmament. But I'm not 100% certain about that. But it does come up slightly differently. So that, of course, also then means that, for example, in your campaign, Bundestag report is more important than the Swedish report, for example, or the Swiss.

Daniel Högsta: I think okay, so the Bundestag report was, yeah, I mean, it's much more than... it didn't. It wasn't asked to... It wasn't asked like, Should Germany join or not join the TPNW with the Bundestag report? It was mainly about the TPNW-NPT relationship. And if I remember correctly, most of the other reports also didn't say that there was a direct conflict between the NPT and the TPNW as well. I mean, we have, you know, and our partners have made our dissatisfaction clear with those other reports, in particular, the Swedish one, which we found very, very problematic, not only in the conclusion, obviously, but also how it was done. And the Swiss report is being reevaluated right now, as you know, as well, so, I mean, naturally, yeah, the Bundestag report is more useful in our lobbying.

Michal Onderco: I want to move on to a different topic. How would you define impact or success?

Daniel Högsta: A stressful question, I mean, every single day, we're constantly trying to, you know, I think like, as criticized as we are from certain corners. I mean, I think we're also extremely self-critical and constantly trying to find new things and constantly butting our heads against what's possible. Like politically or whatever else.

I think one thing that ICAN has been quite good at is celebrating the little victories, you know, things that go in the right direction. From looking at getting an increase on countries to join the humanitarian joint statement before the TPNW was even on the table that was quite like, you know, finding these kinds of things that might seem small, but are concrete measures of success. I mean, I think that's how people stay excited about the work that we're doing. I mean, obviously, ourselves, like how we stay motivated. I mean, these aren't just like, arbitrary things that we picked, to measure success, right? There has to be some kind of concrete, you know, relationship between the facts on the ground and stuff like that.

But yeah, I mean, it depends. I mean, obviously, with signatures, ratifications, it's obviously very easy to measure. With progress in countries that are currently complicit with nuclear weapons. It's, it's very difficult. So then, obviously, we have these different tools that help us, you know, both communicate progress, but also to, you know, get more actors involved. So as far as the Cities appeal and the pledge are useful, not that every pledge is a success, but like...

Michal Onderco: So would you say that, for example, Cities appeal is a success?

Daniel Högsta: I think yeah. I mean, I think for the people that have worked on that appeal in there... I mean, what's really hard for people to do, that we get so many questions about, what can I do? Or what can I do, I'm just, you know, I just live in this town and stuff like that. And for them to get the city's appeal, to get their town or city on board is a success, not just for them, but for all of us, because we're trying to build a bigger network and fun to find more advocates in every town that join as a potential advocate.

Michal Onderco: So I've done very little work on Cities Appeal, and we've been in touch on that before. And one of the things that I find interesting is that so others, with that mix, think about cities and activism of nuclear weapons, they very often think about Mayors for Peace. And Mayors for Peace. Moscow is significant. Beijing is a part of it, you know, like a lot of cities all over the world and part of the Mayors for Peace. If you look at ICAN Cities Appeal, it's mainly sort of Global North countries with a few cities in Australia. There is not a single city, for example, from Eastern Europe, even if you take a very expansive definition

Daniel Högsta: Not for lack of effort.

Michal Onderco: So why do you think that these arguments find more resonance in Berlin than in Warsaw?

Daniel Högsta: Okay. Well, I mean, there's two different ways of looking at a question. The first is that we have more partners in Germany than we have in Warsaw. So that's obviously one explanation is that I'm not... I don't think that our partners in Poland have pushed the push the question. And we don't I mean, yeah, we unfortunately, we're trying hard to develop more, but we don't have so many partners in Eastern Europe right now. I mean, that's something that's we're trying to work on very much. But if you don't have people working on the same thing, it isn't going to happen. And I'm not under any illusions that it would it's, you know, I mean, the same reason that those countries are the most vocally against the nuclear weapons is obviously going to be reflected, I assume, at different levels of the political ladder.

But yeah, the first thing we have to do is to begin to make the case there, and I think we have to, we have a lot more work that we have to do, and in Eastern Europe for sure. And if you mentioned that it's mainly, you know, the Western, I mean, the Cities Appeal and the parliamentary pledge, are tools that we provide, you know, that we host for partners to use, right? If partners don't want to use that tool, they don't find it useful in there, in their advocacy, then they don't use it, right? Partners in a country that I mean, look in Ireland, for example. We don't have any cities on the Appeal there, right? Because it's not, you know, it's not something that their partners are useful to push their government's position.

Michal Onderco: Yeah, but Ireland is a country that has signed and ratified the treaty.

Daniel Högsta: But I mean, like, it's also a country. That is, I mean, so you take a country that, you know, that we're trying to get to join the treaty. Right? And we think that there's no kind of political obstacle to it. All it takes is, you know, you know, diplomatic work. The Cities Appeal, if the partners haven't made the assessment, that it's going to be useful, and they won't use it. So it's, I mean, so that's, I think, why it tends to be a tool that's used mainly in countries that are politically at the moment opposed to the TPNW.

Michal Onderco: Can I push you once more? Okay, so in the Netherlands, there are six or eight cities that signed this Appeal. In Germany, there is 80. In Belgium, there's also dozens. So why the Netherlands in particular rather than Germany or Belgium?

Daniel Högsta: Oh that's just because the partners don't haven't prioritized it as in the same way that the other countries have. I don't think it's more than that. I mean, I don't think that there's like less

support at the municipal level in the Netherlands than there is in Belgium for the TPNW. But I just don't think it hasn't been picked up by the advocates there.

Michal Onderco: Okay, I want to now move to the last block of questions. Where do you think the nuclear field is going to go in the next five to 50 years? And some respondents find this question easier to answer when it's formulated as: do you think there will be nuclear weapons in 50 years?

Daniel Högsta: [pause] I don't know if others have said this, as well, but I was reading this book about the prohibition of the transatlantic slave trade. It's a really good book, actually. It's called "Bury the chains." It was like the first campaign where they used flyers, they handed out flyers, like the first one they did that. It was absolutely amazing, it was started by the Quakers in the UK, or in England. I mean, I think one thing that comes up in the book is that it seemed like, it seemed totally impossible to achieve what they were trying to achieve, like, for 50 years, it was like, it's never going to happen. But then when change did happen, it went really, really quickly. You know, like, we went from like, "this is totally dead in the water" to "you know, it's impossible to be a politician and to stand against this and to defend the sugar plantations". And I think, I think it's, no without signing, kind of trying too many similarities, I think it's going to be a similar thing. When the kind of myth of nuclear weapons is kind of pierced, I think it's going to go much more quickly than we expect. And I, you know, I mean, if I said, like, oh, there's not going to be nuclear weapons in 50 years. I mean, obviously, that's absolutely our ambition, right? Now is to say, like, yes or no, I guess I mean, I believe that the TPNW is a very useful and indispensable tool to get there. That's the belief that I have and I think that's the belief of all ICAN partner organizations. We might be wrong. You know, it might not be it might not be the best. And then maybe, in this community, we'll try something else.

Michal Onderco: When the TPNW was concluded, I offered one of my academic friends, a bottle of wine of their choice to bet whether any nuclear weapon state is going to join the treaty in 10 years. And my friend refused. So, we're not going to bet at this moment, but if we were to bet, do you think that in 10 years, any of the countries currently possessing nuclear weapons will be party to the TPNW, signed and ratified, in ten years?

Daniel Högsta: It just, first of all, I want to say that like, I mean, one of the main motivators that, I mean, one of the main things that we had to convince governments of, is that pursuing the Treaty on the prohibition ... we called it... the new legal instruments that would prohibit nuclear weapons, as we call it back in the day, like it is a worthwhile exercise. And I think that might be our exact wording from our old briefing papers, even if the nuclear weapon states aren't initially on board. And initially is a word there. It's still worthwhile to do it, it's still going to make an impact. And I think right now, you know, with the treaty having been adopted and entered into force, I think that it is still having ... it is still making an impact. Right, how I mean, normatively, I think it's putting more pressure on countries to defend and justify their interesting relationship. I mean, obviously, it's not doing.

Michal Onderco: Do you think Vladimir Putin cares about the TPNW ?

Daniel Högsta: I mean, it's a glib question that we get quite a lot, you know, like, oh, but like in what other sphere? You don't predicate the utility of an approach based on the worst actors? Like, you wouldn't make that. Okay. But I mean, but ultimately, I do think that Russia does care about the TPNW. They were the first one to criticize it after the MSP. You know, they are just as upset about it as, as

anyone else does. The question that I think you're alluding to is like, whether it impacts democracies, unfairly impacts democracies more than others.

Michal Onderco: That's not the question that I was alluding to.

Daniel Högsta: Then I don't need to answer. [laughs]

Michal Onderco: But so, you said, even if, if I understood what you said correctly, then what you said is, even if in 10 years, none of the countries currently possessing nuclear weapons, joins the treaty, we can still think that treaty has an impact.

Daniel Högsta: I mean, I think there has to be some I mean, there has to be some... I mean, impact it is not just about...

Michal Onderco: The question is, how do we know that it has an impact?

Daniel Högsta: How do we know it has an impact? If governments are changing their policies in relation to nuclear weapons, and that obviously encompasses government's actually dismantling and disarming, but it also involves governments saying that they no longer want to rely on nuclear weapons for their national security. So, it's not just about the nuclear weapon states. It's also about the other states around them. I think. That's very clear. That's what our strategy is.

But yeah, I mean, we haven't looked 10 years ahead to see what the benchmark needs to be then. I think it's going to be... if you look at the makeup right now politically, and then nuclear weapon states, like it's extremely difficult and extremely complicated. But I think I certainly think it's moving in the right direction. How do I measure that? I measure that through the progress I make governments observing the MSP, governments participating victim assistance, environmental remediation, signatures, ratifications to the treaty. These are all things that will make a difference.

Michal Onderco: Imagine a world without nuclear weapons. How does the security in a world without nuclear weapons look like?

Daniel Högsta: I don't know. I mean I think I don't accept the assumption that the security in this world is entirely based on nuclear weapons keeping us safe.

Michal Onderco: We don't have to accept that assumption. How do you see the stability in a world without nuclear weapons?

Daniel Högsta: I think it's a world where it's with increased adherence to international norms, increased respect for international humanitarian law, or maybe like restored respect for international humanitarian law. I think it's been a lot of erosion in that sphere. Yeah, I mean, I would hope it would be a world that places more, more value on cooperation and compromise within the UN sphere than outside it.

Michal Onderco: is there a place for deterrence in a world without nuclear weapons?

Daniel Högsta: Well, there's no place for nuclear deterrence. But yeah, but I mean...

Michal Onderco: What kind of weapons do you think are going to provide for deterrence in such a world? Or what measures?

Daniel Högsta: No, I think deterrence is... I mean, sanctions are also a deterrent measure, right? I mean, international norms and IHL are also deterrence in their own way. Delegitimization, and stigmatization are deterrence in a way, so this deterrence is not just about, you know, who's got the biggest weapons or the most effective weapons, right? That's why we're constantly trying to constrain them because it's not a safe place to be.

Michal Onderco: Okay. I always end the interview with a question. Is there something I should have asked you and I didn't?

Daniel Högsta: No, I don't think so.

Michal Onderco: thank you very much.