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THE FUTURE OF THE OTTAWA TREATY

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The Future of the Ottawa Treaty
(HillStudies)

Publication No. 2025-20-E

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (also referred to as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or the Ottawa Treaty) was signed by 122 countries in 1997 and entered into force in 1999. Observers credit it with reducing global anti-personnel mine stockpiles, facilitating landmine clearance and lowering civilian casualty rates.

In 2025, several States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty that border Russia announced their withdrawal from the treaty, citing changing security environments in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. These are the first such withdrawals in the treaty's history and occur in the context of broader pressures on global arms control agreements and norms. As of early 2026, more than 160 states were party to the treaty, although major military powers and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, Russia and the United States) remained outside the treaty.

This HillStudy reviews the origins and provisions of the Ottawa Treaty, its humanitarian impact and the implications of recent withdrawals within the wider context of multilateral arms control.

THE FUTURE OF THE OTTAWA TREATY

1 INTRODUCTION

Former Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien has called the 1997 *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (also referred to as the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or the Ottawa Treaty) "one of the greatest achievements in Canadian diplomatic history."[1] Global Affairs Minister Anita Anand, in her address to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on 29 September 2025, described Canada's role in spearheading the Ottawa Treaty as an example of the country's "innovative leader[ship] on global issues."[2] Between 1999 and 2013 alone, the treaty is estimated to have saved more than 280,000 lives.[3] Over its full period of implementation, it has led to the elimination of more than 55 million landmines, the reclamation of vast areas of contaminated land and the allocation of billions of dollars to "mine action," namely, mine clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance, advocacy and stockpile destruction.[4]

More recently, however, the consensus around the Ottawa Treaty has begun to fracture. Since March 2025, five States Parties (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Poland) have initiated or completed their withdrawals from the treaty, and a sixth – Ukraine – has suspended its participation (discussed below). In the view of one analyst:

> Today, the Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel landmines – and its cousin, the Convention on Cluster Munitions – no longer make strategic sense. They are relics of a geopolitical ecosystem that simply no longer exists. Continuing to adhere to them in an age of rising great power competition, peer-on-peer warfare, and protracted land campaigns such as that conducted by Russia in Ukraine handicaps responsible military powers and benefits revisionist states that reject the rules altogether.[5]

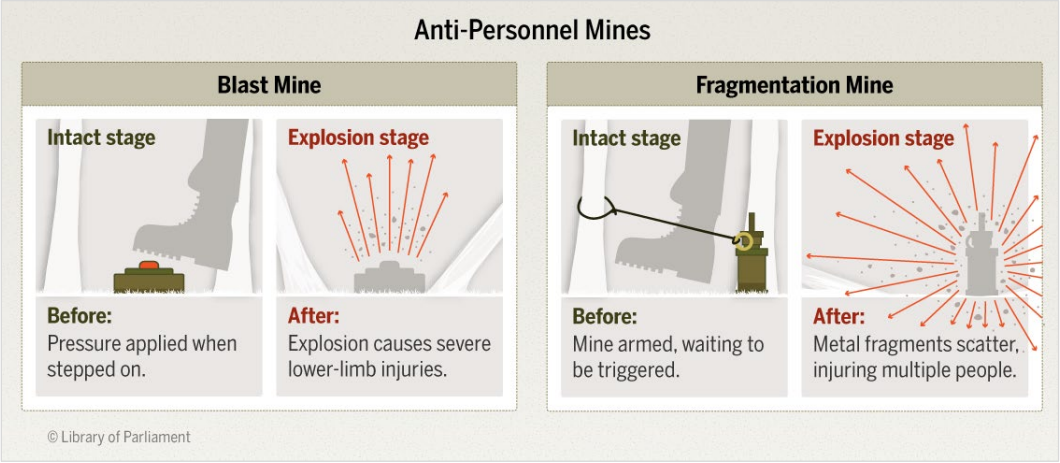
Others strongly disagree with that view. Former Canadian foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy, one of the treaty's architects, and Louise Arbour, a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, have condemned the "resurgence in the use of landmines and the once-unthinkable prospect of States Parties withdrawing from the treaty."[6] They have urged Canada to "once again lead the way" and reaffirm its role as a convener and guardian of global norms that protect the most vulnerable.[7]

These developments underscore the importance of revisiting the treaty's history, provisions and relevance. Accordingly, this HillStudy begins with a brief description of anti-personnel mines and of the Ottawa Process, the international diplomatic initiative that led to the treaty. It then summarizes some of the treaty's key articles, examines the treaty's impact and reviews additional perspectives on the treaty's ongoing relevance. Finally, it considers the broader arms control landscape, particularly in light of recent and impending withdrawals from the treaty.

2 ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

Anti-personnel mines (APMs) are explosive devices "designed to kill or seriously injure when triggered by a person."[8] APMs and anti-vehicle mines are the two main categories of landmines. APMs can be further divided into two groups: blast mines and fragmentation mines.[9] Blast mines, as explained by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), "detonate directly underfoot, causing severe lower-limb injuries."[10] Fragmentation mines, in contrast, are usually triggered by pressure or tripwire and "project metal fragments over a wider area, injuring multiple people."[11] The two types of APMs are compared in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Main Categories of Anti-Personnel Mines



Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using information obtained from International Committee of the Red Cross, *Frequently asked questions: Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention or 'Ottawa Treaty'*.

Although the use of APMs dates to at least the American Civil War (1861–1865),[12] mine warfare only became "firmly established" during the Second World War.[13]

In the aftermath of the latter war, the 1949 Geneva Conventions addressed mine clearance – specifically prohibiting the forcible use of prisoners of war for demining. However, the Conventions stopped short of banning the use, manufacture, stockpiling or transfer of landmines outright.[14]

In a series of meetings convened by the ICRC in the 1970s, the possibility of regulating landmines was raised; this groundwork culminated in Protocol II to the 1980 *Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons* (CCW), which introduced partial restrictions on their use.[15] Nonetheless, by the early 1990s, landmines were still causing 25,000 civilian deaths each year, and the CCW was widely regarded as an inadequate response.[16]

3 THE OTTAWA PROCESS

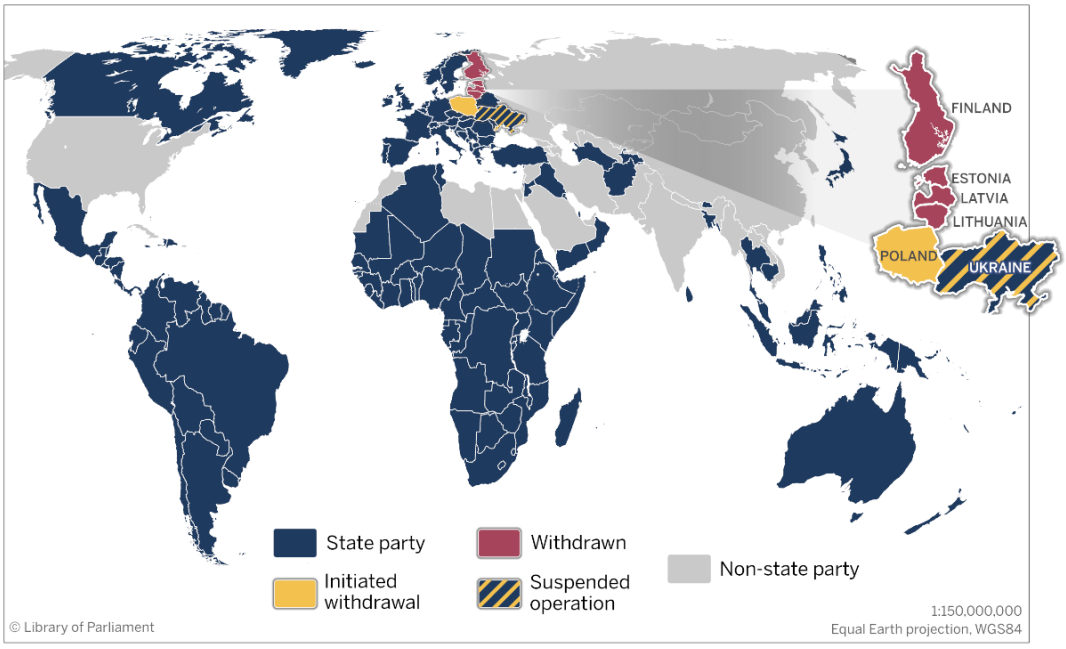
In October 1996, seizing on growing momentum for a landmine ban, Mr. Axworthy and the Government of Canada, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and Handicap International (now known as Humanity & Inclusion) invited both State and non-State actors to a strategy conference in Ottawa. The resulting partnership with NGOs formed one of three pillars that underpin what became known as the "Ottawa Process," a distinctive diplomatic approach. The two other pillars of that process involved building a coalition of small and medium-sized like-minded states, and deliberately bypassing the UN system of disarmament negotiations to "operate outside the normal channels and fora."[17]

Fifty states and 24 observers attended the October 1996 strategy conference, which concluded with an invitation by Mr. Axworthy to return to Ottawa the following December to sign a treaty.[18]

4 THE OTTAWA TREATY

The Ottawa Treaty was signed by representatives of 122 countries in Ottawa on 3 and 4 December 1997. It entered into force on 1 March 1999, "the fastest entry into force ever for a multilateral arms-related treaty."[19] By June 2025, the Ottawa Treaty had grown to its highest membership to date, with 166 States Parties.[20] Notably, three permanent members of the UN Security Council – China, Russia and the United States (U.S.) – have never been States Parties. In the case of the U.S., resistance has been driven by its commitment to the defence of South Korea; U.S. policy has historically permitted the deployment of U.S.-made landmines along the demilitarized zone that separates North Korea and South Korea.[21] Figure 2 illustrates the status of membership in the Ottawa Treaty as of January 2026.

Figure 2 – Membership Status of States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty



Sources: Map prepared by the Library of Parliament, 2025, using data obtained from Natural Earth, *1:50m Cultural Vectors* and *1:50m Physical Vectors*, version 5.1.1; International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2024*, December 2024; and *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction*. The following software was used: Esri, ArcGIS Pro, version 3.5.3.

4.1 KEY ARTICLES

The Ottawa Treaty consists of a preamble and 22 articles that prohibit the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines, as reflected in the treaty's official title. The articles summarized below highlight the treaty's core prohibitions, implementation obligations and rules to govern compliance and withdrawal.

Article 1 sets out general obligations, which have been described as the "normative heart" of the treaty.[22] In addition to abiding by the four prohibitions included in the treaty's title, States Parties are also required to "destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines."

Article 2 provides definitions and clarifies the scope of the treaty, which is restricted to APMs and explicitly excludes anti-vehicle mines. Given that greater physical pressure is needed to activate anti-vehicle mines, they are considered less of a threat to civilians. Still, some observers have raised concerns about excluding anti-vehicle mines from the treaty, noting that they too pose a threat to civilians when placed on roadways and other high-traffic areas.[23]

Article 3 provides exceptions to the prohibitions on retaining and transferring "anti-personnel mines for the development of and training in mine detection, mine clearance, or mine destruction techniques." In 2024, 62 States Parties retained mines for that purpose, 21 of which (including Canada) retained between 1,000 and 6,000 mines each.[24] The ICBL has "expressed concern at the large number of States Parties that retain mines but are apparently not using them for the permitted purposes."[25] They have noted that details are not being provided about their use and that the number of retained mines has, in some cases, remained the same, suggesting that they are not being used for training or research.

Under Article 4, all States Parties are obligated to destroy their stockpile of APMs within four years of becoming a State Party. Though "stockpile" is not defined, it is broadly interpreted as encompassing "all anti-personnel mines that are within a State Party's ownership or possession or which are under its jurisdiction or control."[26] Only two States Parties, Ukraine and Greece, were found to have stockpiled APMs in 2024, in violation of Article 4; together, they held approximately 3.6 million mines.[27] It is believed that Tuvalu, which acceded to the Ottawa Treaty in 2011, does not possess any APMs, but it has never made an official declaration to that effect.[28]

Article 5 has been described as the most demanding and expensive set of obligations in the treaty. It requires each State Party to

> destroy or ensure the destruction of all [APMs] in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than ten years after the entry into force of [the treaty].[29]

Under Article 6, a framework for international cooperation and assistance is established to help implement the treaty. From the outset of negotiations, it has been widely understood that many developing countries would require technical and financial support to implement the Ottawa Treaty effectively.[30]

Article 19 prohibits any reservations to the provisions of the treaty, meaning that all States Parties are required to fully comply with every article of the treaty, without exception.

Lastly, under Article 20, the Ottawa Treaty does not have an end date. States Parties that wish to withdraw from the treaty must notify all other States Parties, the Depositary (the UN Secretary-General) and the UN Security Council. Withdrawal takes effect six months after the Secretary-General receives the notification with a full explanation of the reasons for the withdrawal. However, if the State Party that is withdrawing is engaged in an armed conflict at the end of this six-month period, the withdrawal is postponed until the conflict ends. This provision, inspired by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, aims to prevent what has been called "opportunistic rearmament."[31]

5 THE IMPACT TODAY OF ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

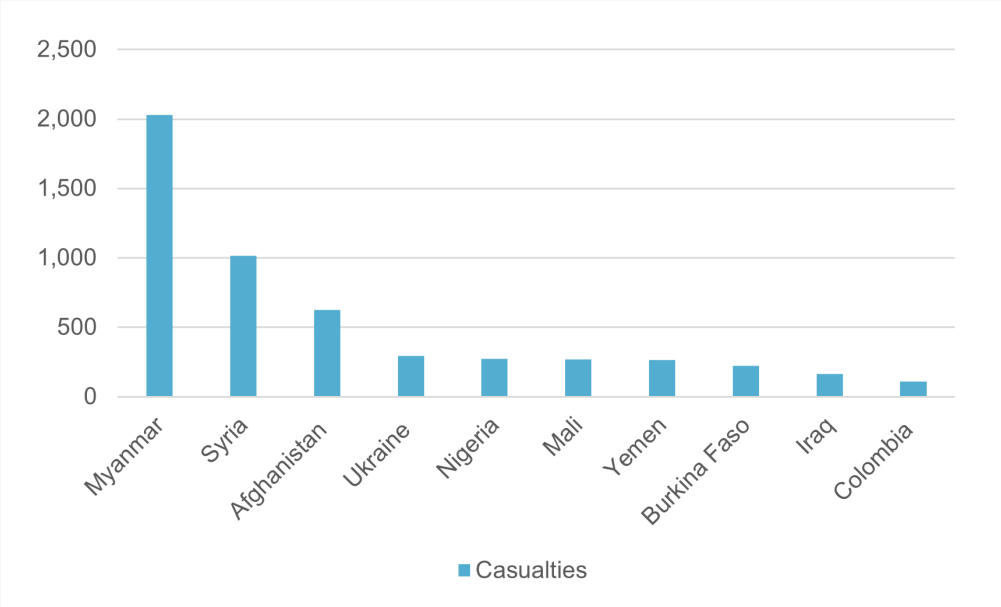
Between mid-2024 and October 2025, APMs were used by states that are not party to the Ottawa Treaty, namely, Russia, Myanmar, Iran and North Korea.[32] Ukraine, a State Party, is also alleged to have used APMs against Russian forces in Ukraine since 2022, as discussed below.

In addition, over the same period, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) used APMs on the territory of 10 States Parties – Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo – and on the territory of states not party to the treaty (India, Myanmar and Pakistan).[33] Unlike the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol II, which is binding on both states and NSAGs, the Ottawa Treaty is binding on States Parties only. The treaty does not directly prohibit NSAGs from using anti-personnel mines, although States Parties are required to take measures to prevent their use.[34] Some argue that the Ottawa Treaty has nevertheless managed to significantly curtail the NSAGs' use of APMs, primarily because governments – having largely ceased or reduced their production, stockpiling and use – have made such weapons far more difficult to acquire.[35]

According to the ICBL, at least 6,279 casualties were caused by APMs and explosive remnants of war (ERWs)[36] in 2024 – the highest figure in four years. With 2,029 people killed or wounded, Myanmar recorded the highest number of casualties caused by APMs and ERWs in 2024.[37] The documented use of APMs in Myanmar has increased significantly since 2021, when Myanmar's military seized power in an armed coup. Landmine and ERW contamination were reported in 64% (211 of 330) of all townships in Myanmar in 2024, a significant increase from the 100 townships reported as contaminated in 2020.[38] While Myanmar's military is the primary user of landmines in the country, NSAGs have also used and produced APMs in Myanmar, including improvised blast and fragmentation mines that are victim-activated.

As seen in Figure 3, seven of the ten countries with the highest APM and ERW casualties in 2024 were countries the World Bank Group classifies as low income or lower-middle income.[39] Three exceptions are Ukraine, Colombia and Iraq, which are classified as upper-middle income countries. In 2024, men and boys accounted for an estimated 78% of APM and ERW casualties in cases where the gender was known,[40] slightly below the historical average. Men and boys made up 84% of civilian casualties in the period from 1999 to 2023.[41] Overall, in 2024, estimates show that civilians made up 90% of all recorded casualties caused by APMs and ERWs where civilian status was known.[42]

Figure 3 – The Ten Countries with the Most Anti-Personnel Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Casualties in 2024



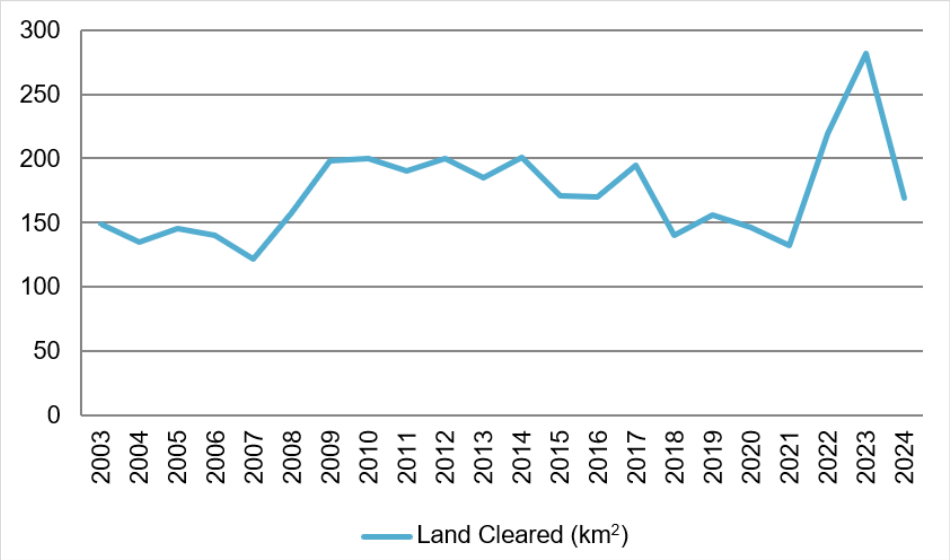
Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025*, p. 98.

Reports also indicate that India, Myanmar, Russia and South Korea – none of which are party to the Ottawa Treaty – appear to be actively developing or producing APMs.[43] More than 50 states are estimated to have produced APMs at some point historically.[44]

Globally, assessments showed that at least 57 states had APM-contaminated land in 2024, including 32 States Parties and three other areas unable to accede to the Ottawa Treaty (Kosovo, Somaliland and Western Sahara) because of their political status. By comparison, the assessments revealed that 99 states and other jurisdictions had APM-contaminated land in 1999. In 2024, approximately 169 square kilometres of contaminated land was cleared – about 40% less than in 2023. States Parties Cambodia, Croatia and Yemen reported the largest clearance totals in 2024.[45]

According to the UN, since 1999, more than 55 million APMs have been destroyed across 13,000 square kilometres of land in over 60 countries.[46] As seen in Figure 4, since 2003, States Parties have cleared over 3,700 square kilometres of land. Despite this progress, as of 1 October 2025, 13 States Parties had requested extensions of their 10-year clearance and destruction obligations, and many of them have done so repeatedly.[47]

Figure 4 – Cumulative Land Area Cleared by Ottawa Treaty States Parties, 2003–2024



Sources: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2025*, p. 52; ICBL *Landmine Monitor 2024*, p. 68; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2019*, p. 3; ICBL *Landmine Monitor 2017*, p. 2; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2016*, p. 3; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2015*, p. 19; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2010*, p. 1; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2009*, p. 36; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2008*, p. 19; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2007*, p. 21; ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2006*, p. 23; and ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2005*, p. 22.

6 WITHDRAWALS FROM THE OTTAWA TREATY

On 18 March 2025, the defence ministers of Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia issued a joint statement recommending the withdrawal of their countries from the Ottawa Treaty. The statement cited the need for operational flexibility to use new weapons systems and solutions "to bolster the defence of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization's] vulnerable Eastern Flank" as the primary reasons for withdrawing from the treaty.[48]

Two weeks later, the Government of Finland announced that it would also begin preparations to withdraw from the treaty. In a statement, the Finnish government said that the security environment in Europe "has changed fundamentally," and that "Russia poses a long-term threat to Europe." It further explained that, in this new security environment, "anti-personnel mines would improve the capabilities of the Defence Forces and strengthen Finland's national defence capacity and security."[49] The Finnish government added, however, that Finland remained committed to both the humanitarian objectives of the treaty and global work to minimize the impact of landmines.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania deposited their instruments of withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty on 27 June 2025, and their withdrawal took effect on 27 December 2025. Finland deposited its instrument of withdrawal on 10 July 2025, and its withdrawal took effect on 10 January 2026. Poland's withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty is set to take effect on 20 February 2026, after it deposited its instrument of withdrawal on 20 August 2025. All five countries are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Finland, Lithuania and Poland have indicated that they will begin producing APMs following their withdrawals from the treaty.[50]

On 29 June 2025, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree recommending Ukraine's withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty. A statement by Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that Russia's "mass use" of landmines against Ukraine since 2022 "has created an asymmetric advantage for the aggressor." The ministry goes on to say that with its right to self-defence in mind, "Ukraine has made the difficult but necessary political decision" to stop its implementation of the treaty.[51]

Russia has used landmines in Ukraine extensively since its full-scale invasion in 2022. According to the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Ukraine has become the most heavily contaminated country since the end of the Second World War. UNMAS estimates that more than 20% of Ukraine's land – or 139,000 square kilometres – is contaminated by mines or unexploded ordnance.[52] Available evidence indicates that Russia has deployed at least 13 types of APMs in Ukraine, including Soviet-era hand-emplaced pressure or tripwire mines, as well as more modern APMs that can be scattered by rockets or truck-mounted launchers.[53] Russia has also declared publicly that it has used drones to emplace several types of mines in Ukraine.[54]

At the same time, there is evidence that Ukrainian forces have used APMs against Russia since 2022, in violation of Ukraine's obligations under Article 1 of the Ottawa Treaty. For example, in 2023, Human Rights Watch and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, a body established by the UN Human Rights Council, reported that Ukrainian armed forces used rocket-delivered landmines to carry out attacks against Russian forces in Ukraine.[55] Ukraine also violated its obligations under Article 1 of the Ottawa Treaty when it acquired APMs from the U.S. in late 2024.[56] While U.S. officials have not disclosed the types and quantities of the landmines it provided to Ukraine, they indicated that the mines were non-persistent, meaning that they possess a self-destruction or self-deactivation feature that limits their lifespan.[57] Non-persistent landmines, or "smart mines," are also banned under the Ottawa Treaty.

As noted above, Article 20 of the Ottawa Treaty specifies that a withdrawal from the treaty may not take effect if a State Party is actively engaged in an armed conflict. As a result, Ukraine remains legally bound by the treaty until such time as its war with Russia ends.[58] While Ukraine has not deposited its instrument of withdrawal, on 18 July 2025, it announced that it had suspended its operation of the Ottawa Treaty in accordance with Article 62 of the 1969 *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties* (the Vienna Convention).[59] This article, in Ukraine's view, allows parties to invoke "a fundamental change of circumstances" as a ground for suspending the operation of a treaty. However, analysts have argued that the Vienna Convention does not address armed conflict situations and that the Ottawa Treaty "is specifically designed to apply during those situations."[60] To this point, the *Landmine Monitor 2025* report states that Article 73 of the Vienna Convention specifies that "the provision regarding a 'fundamental change of circumstances' does not apply during armed conflict." More generally, the ICBL comments that "[s]eeking to temporarily avoid the treaty's obligations at a time when they are most critical is contrary to both its operative provisions and its humanitarian object and purpose."[61]

Furthermore, states that withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty are still subject to the conditions for using APMs set out in Protocol II and Amended Protocol II of the CCW. While the CCW and its protocols do not ban the use of APMs, Protocol II requires states to take "all feasible precautions" to safeguard civilians with respect to their use. For its part, Amended Protocol II sets out obligations for the marking, deactivation, detectability and removal of landmines.[62]

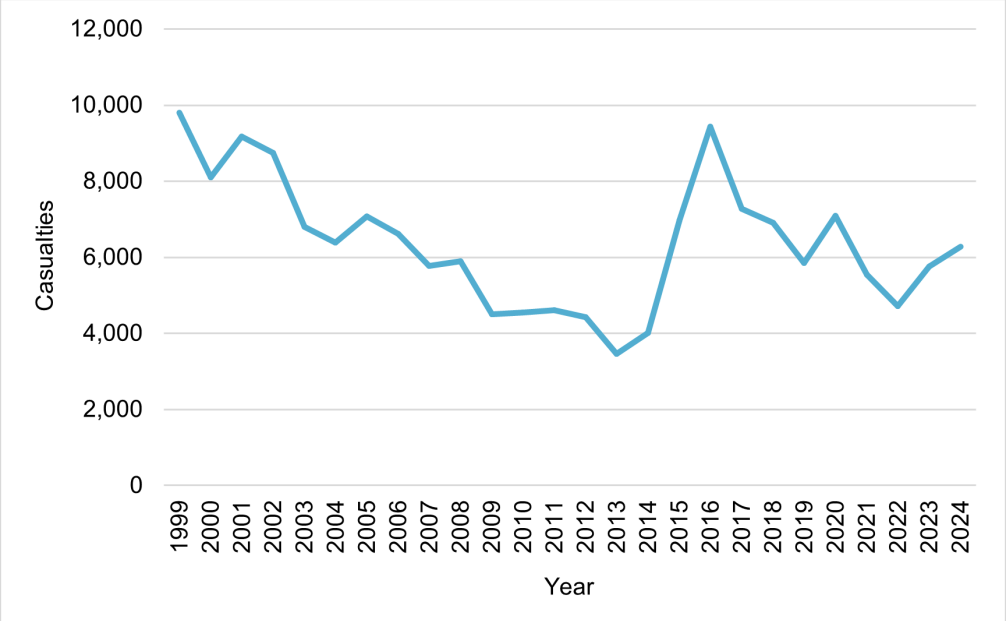
6.1 IMPLICATIONS OF WITHDRAWALS FROM THE OTTAWA TREATY

The withdrawals of five States Parties from the Ottawa Treaty, as well as Ukraine's suspension of its operation, have provoked concern among a range of stakeholders, including other States Parties, humanitarian organizations and proponents of global disarmament regimes. Various States Parties, including Ireland, New Zealand and Norway, for example, have expressed concern about the possible consequences of these withdrawals on international norms against the use of landmines and their effect on other humanitarian disarmament instruments.[63] For its part, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has indicated that Canada has been in dialogue with European countries which are making "difficult and complex decisions" about the Ottawa Treaty. According to a GAC spokesperson, "[s]upport for the Ottawa Convention and its universal adherence remains a core priority for Canada."[64]

On 16 June 2025, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said he was "gravely concerned" by the withdrawals, describing the action as "particularly troubling, as it risks weakening civilian protection and undermining two decades of a normative framework that has saved countless lives."[65] As shown in Figure 5, despite the progress made, APMs and ERWs continued to kill or injure over 5,000 people per

year, as casualties increased by 9.1% in 2024.[66] The figure also shows a significant increase in APM and ERW casualties in 2015 due to armed conflicts in Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, and given the greater availability of casualty data.

Figure 5 – Annual Anti-Personnel Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Casualties, 1999–2024



Sources: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), *Landmine Monitor 2025*, p. 95; and ICBL, *Landmine Monitor 2024*, p. 42.

In a joint statement made in April 2025, the ICRC and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said that withdrawals from the Ottawa Treaty would "mark a dangerous setback for the protection of civilians in armed conflict."[67] The joint statement added that, "[i]n times of great uncertainty and acute international tensions, we call on states to reinforce the stigma against weapons whose human cost in unacceptable." Mines Action Canada reacted to the announced withdrawals saying that such actions would be a "rhetorical victory for Russia by showing that international law can be abandoned." According to the organization, "[l]eaving the Ottawa Treaty will create unnecessary distance between members of NATO further giving Russia the impression that the alliance is weakening."[68]

Some observers have suggested that these withdrawals could prompt other States Parties to question whether the Ottawa Treaty remains appropriate given current geopolitical security dynamics. A March 2025 paper co-authored by a member of the United Kingdom (U.K.) House of Lords and supported by a former U.K. defence secretary, called on the U.K. to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty. Specifically, the paper argues that the Ottawa Treaty and the *Convention on Cluster*

Munitions, "directly and appreciably hamper British combat capacity and do the same to British allies."[69] According to the paper, landmines would be

> crucial weapons in any major war with Russia, allowing the U.K. and allied forces to compress Russian advances into designated kill zones, isolate and destroy Russian forward units, and disrupt Russian avenues of attack and retreat and logistics.[70]

While the U.K. government has said that it remains committed to the Ottawa Treaty, a spokesperson for its Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office also acknowledged the "sovereign right of these countries" to withdraw from the treaty.[71] On 3 April 2025, several members of the U.K. House of Lords called on the U.K. government to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty.[72]

Various commentators have said that Canada should also re-evaluate its position on APMs in view of the war in Ukraine and new threats of ground attacks. For example, according to one researcher, "[t]he return of great power conflict means that even Canada must now consider scenarios in which landmines become a necessity."[73]

Others have questioned whether Canada's participation in NATO deterrence operations or close partner training missions could be compromised or complicated by the recent withdrawals from or declared suspension of the Ottawa Treaty. Mr. Axworthy, for example, has said that Latvia's exit from the Ottawa Treaty may impose "a complex legal and operational dilemma" on Canadian troops stationed there as part of Operation REASSURANCE, Canada's support for the NATO Multinational Brigade-Latvia. According to Mr. Axworthy,

> [i]f Latvia were to employ landmines, Canadian forces could not participate in or support such actions without violating the treaty. If compliance with the treaty becomes impossible due to Latvia's actions, Canada might have to reassess its role in the mission.[74]

Human Rights Watch has also said that Ukraine's suspension of the treaty raises an interoperability question about how a State Party to the treaty (Canada) can train the military forces of a country working against the objectives of the treaty (Ukraine). Since 2015, Canada has helped to train Ukrainian troops under Operation UNIFIER. For its part, the Department of National Defence responded to a media inquiry on the subject by saying that Ukraine's suspension of the treaty "'does not prevent Canada's training support' under Operation UNIFIER, which remains focused on 'professionalism, capability and capacity.'"[75]

With regard to the future of the Ottawa Treaty, some commentators have advocated something akin to a middle path. One analyst, for example, has proposed amending it to include a "review mechanism to address wartime exigencies without abandoning its moral compass." The same analyst has also suggested that technologies such as GPS-enabled and time-limited landmines could be part of the solution.[76]

Reflecting specifically on Ukraine's announced withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty, a researcher at Temple University wrote:

> Ukraine's position provides a stark reminder that efforts to restrict the use of weapons can falter once they are perceived (rightly or wrongly) to provide benefits in excess of their (very real and dire) humanitarian consequences. As much as international lawyers envision [international humanitarian law] as a one-way march towards a more humane world, security and *realpolitik* can outweigh the pull for compliance with international law in ways that reverberate for international law itself.[77]

According to this researcher, it is not hard to imagine a "trickle-down effect" from moves such as the withdrawals from the Ottawa Treaty. Such action opens the door

> to reducing the reach of international commitments for States who see little reason to continue to constrain themselves while others appear so willing to dispense with their international legal obligations.[78]

6.2 UNITED STATES LANDMINE POLICY AND GLOBAL MINE ACTION

While not a State Party to the Ottawa Treaty, the U.S. has expressed support for the treaty's objectives and provided significant financial assistance toward humanitarian mine action under various presidential administrations. Moreover, in 2014, the administration of President Barack Obama expressed an intention to eventually accede to the Ottawa Treaty.[79] It also banned the acquisition and production of APMs, and undertook to destroy APM stockpiles not required for the defence of South Korea. However, in 2020, President Donald Trump reversed this policy with a directive that allowed for the use, production and deployment of landmines without geographic limitation, as long as they are non-persistent.[80] This policy was reversed once again in 2022, when President Joe Biden reverted to the Obama administration's policy of 2014 that restricted the use of landmines outside of the Korean peninsula.

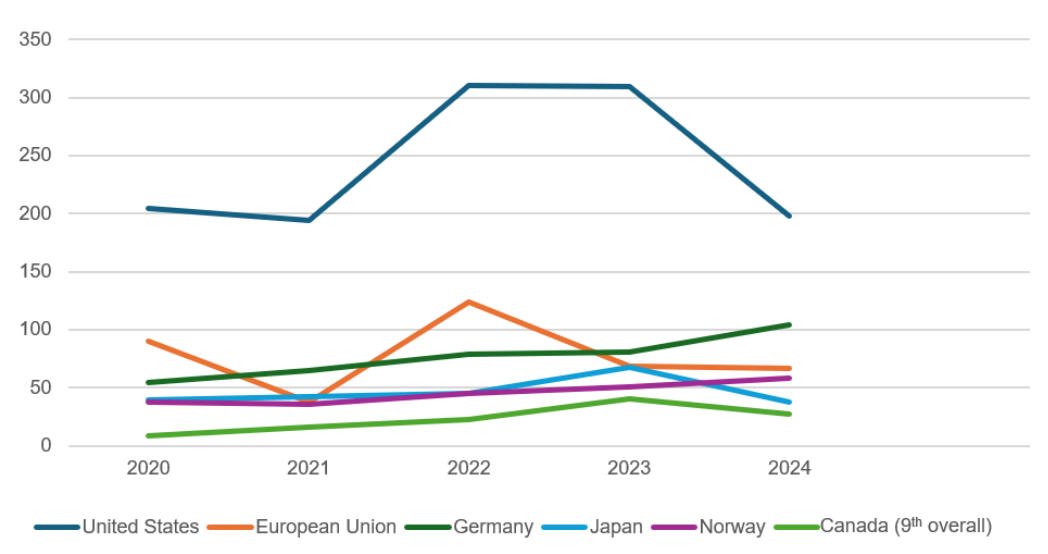
Over the past several years, the U.S. has further shifted its policy on APMs. As noted above, in late 2024, the Biden administration approved plans to supply Ukraine with APMs. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy welcomed the transfer and called APMs "essential" for the defence of Ukraine from Russia. Various stakeholders and observers, however, including Mines Action Canada, condemned the U.S. transfer of APMs, saying that it would further endanger civilians in Ukraine for years to come.[81]

In early December 2025, the Trump administration indicated that it would once again modify U.S. APM policy. According to a Pentagon memo, U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth had initiated a review of landmine policy and called for a new one to be recommended within 90 days. The memo indicated that Secretary Hegseth had outlined five objectives for the new policy, including that geographic limits on the use of APMs be lifted, which would allow their use outside of the Korean Peninsula.[82]

For decades, the U.S. has been the largest international supporter of mine action programs, including mine clearance, victim assistance and risk education. It is unclear how significantly the Trump administration's cuts to U.S. foreign assistance will impact U.S. mine action efforts globally. Upon taking office in early 2025, the Trump administration issued a 90-day suspension of foreign aid, including for humanitarian demining programs. The Trump administration subsequently initiated significant cuts to U.S. foreign aid, which some observers say will disrupt global mine action and put civilian lives at risk.[83] The December 2025 Pentagon memo indicates that President Trump had rescinded the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program, a campaign through which the U.S. supported international APM clearance. However, the memo further notes that the forthcoming U.S. APM policy would enable the U.S. to remain "a global leader in unexploded ordnance clearing assistance and in conventional weapons destruction."[84]

As seen in Figure 6 below, in 2024, international donors contributed approximately US$761 million to mine action. The U.S. alone, however, provided over US$198 million, representing 26% of all international support.[85] Furthermore, between 2019 and 2023, the U.S. was the largest single donor, providing US$1.2 billion – 35% of all global funding. Canada, for its part, contributed US$96.7 million over the same period.[86]

Figure 6 – Financial Contributions to Mine Action, 2020–2024: Top Five Donors and Canada ($US millions)



Note: Germany contributes to Mine Action both bilaterally and through the European Union, of which it is a member State.

Source: Figure prepared by the Library of Parliament using data obtained from International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025*, p. 119.

7 ARMS CONTROL IMPLICATIONS

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has significantly upended regional and global security dynamics, prompting countries across the world to reassess their strategic and operational military readiness. Motivated by the "long-term threat posed by Russia to Euro-Atlantic security," NATO allies at the 2025 Leaders' Summit in The Hague committed to investing 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) annually in core defence requirements and defence- and security-related spending by 2035.[87] This target is more than double the 2% of GDP defence-spending commitment that NATO members made in 2014. At that time, only three allies met the 2% target; by the end of 2025, nearly all allies were expected to meet or exceed that figure.[88]

The reassessment of strategic and operational military readiness has been especially pronounced for countries on NATO's eastern flank. All six countries that have initiated or completed their withdrawal or suspension from the Ottawa Treaty share a land border with Russia. In 2023, Russia became the first country to ever vote against the annual UN General Assembly resolution urging the full universalization and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty. Russia voted against this General Assembly resolution again in 2024 and 2025, the only country to do so on both occasions. Nineteen countries abstained from the vote on the 2025 General Assembly resolution, including the U.S.[89]

The implications of Russia's aggression against Ukraine for multilateral arms control regimes, however, extend beyond the Ottawa Treaty. For example, Lithuania, concerned about its ability to effectively deter Russia, formally deposited its instrument of withdrawal from the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* (CCM) in September 2024. Following a six-month notice period, the withdrawal took effect in March 2025, making Lithuania the first country to withdraw from the CCM.

In keeping with its rationale for withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty,[90] Lithuania cited changing regional security dynamics and geopolitical threats, and the need to maintain "a full spectrum of defensive tools" in light of these dynamics in justifying its withdrawal from the CCM.[91] It also referenced Russia's widespread use of cluster munitions against Ukraine as another contributing factor to rising regional instability. Of the six countries that initiated or completed their withdrawal or suspension from the Ottawa Treaty, only Lithuania was a State Party to the CCM.

In addition to the weakening of both the CCM and the Ottawa Treaty, the European and transatlantic security- and confidence-building regimes have eroded in recent years. For example, in November 2023, Russia withdrew from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). Signed in 1990, the CFE set numerical limits on categories of military equipment and established a system of transparency in which States Parties allowed verification inspections. Russia had initially suspended its implementation of the CFE in 2007, saying that the treaty was no longer

compatible with its regional security interests. NATO allies, including Canada, responded to Russia's withdrawal from the CFE by suspending their own participation in the treaty. In a statement, NATO allies said that, while "recognizing the role of the CFE as a cornerstone of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, a situation whereby Allied States Parties abide by the Treaty, while Russia does not, would be unsustainable."[92]

8 CONCLUSION

Since coming into force on 1 March 1999, the Ottawa Treaty has contributed to a significant reduction in the use and production of anti-personnel mines, widespread clearance of contaminated land and fewer casualties. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, however, marked a potential turning point for the treaty. For Eastern European States Parties that share a border with Russia, respect for global norms prohibiting the use of landmines is increasingly being weighed against perceived threats to their territorial integrity. By withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty – the first such action in the treaty's history – Russia's Eastern European neighbours are signalling a shift away from the consensus that had held for more than two decades.

When considered alongside Lithuania's withdrawal from the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* and Russia's withdrawal from the *Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe*, these developments point to broader challenges for global arms control regimes. While governments, NGOs, victims' groups, international law experts and others continue to advocate for the humanitarian objectives of such agreements, recent trends suggest that security considerations are increasingly influencing States Parties' treaty commitments.

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