

From expendable to indispensable?

The anti-personnel mine and Finnish territorial defence

Anna Savolainen

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Anna Savolainen

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Abstract

In 2025, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty and the reintroduction of the anti-personnel mine (APM) into their defences. Bordering Russia, the countries justified the decision by citing the deterioration in the security situation. Using Finland as a case study, this report examines more closely the factors that enabled the ban on APM in the past and prompted its reintroduction in 2025. The identified factors include political shifts in Finland and internationally, notably in the United States; Finland's domestic demographic and economic conditions; and, most importantly, changing assessments of Russia's strategy and tactics in light of lessons from the war in Ukraine.

In addition, the report explores and lays out the implications of reintroducing APM for collective defence within NATO. Ensuring interoperability will pose a particular challenge for cooperation between Finland and Sweden, given the two countries' extensive defence ties and the strict Swedish interpretation of the Ottawa Treaty. The allies will therefore need to find ways to balance operational needs with their obligations under international law.

Finally, the report reflects upon a potential shift in the mode of security policy-making in Finland and upon APM use based on lessons from Ukraine.

Keywords: anti-personnel mines, arms control, Finland, infantry tactics, interoperability, territorial defence

Sammanfattning

År 2025 meddelade Finland, Polen och de tre baltiska staterna att de skulle lämna Ottawafördraget och återinföra personminor i sina försvar. De fem länderna, som alla gränsar till Ryssland, motiverade beslutet med det försämrade säkerhetsläget. Med Finland som fallstudie undersöker denna rapport närmare de faktorer som tidigare möjliggjorde förbudet mot personminor och som år 2025 ledde till minornas återinförande. De identifierade faktorerna omfattar bland annat politiska skiften i USA och inom Finland, endogena demografiska och ekonomiska förhållanden i Finland, samt framförallt förändrade bedömningar av rysk strategi och taktik baserade på erfarenheter från kriget i Ukraina.

Därutöver undersöker och redogör rapporten för konsekvenserna av återinförandet av personminor för det kollektiva försvaret inom Nato. Interoperabilitet kommer att utgöra en särskild utmaning för samarbetet mellan Finland och Sverige, givet ländernas omfattande försvarsband och Sveriges strikta tolkning av Ottawafördraget. De allierade kommer därför att snabbt behöva finna lösningar för att balansera operativa behov och skyldigheter enligt internationell rätt.

Slutligen reflekterar rapporten över den potentiellt förändrade karaktären av säkerhetspolitiskt beslutsfattande i Finland och över utnyttjandet av personminor baserat på lärdomar från Ukraina.

Nyckelord: Finland, gränsförsvar, infanteritaktik, interoperabilitet, personminor, truppminor, vapenkontroll

Preface

The Northern European and Transatlantic Security (NOTS) programme at the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) analyses security and defence developments in Western countries and organisations that influence Swedish security, and is commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence.

This timely report arrives when European countries undergo their most intense rearmament for many decades. As NATO members seek the most efficient ways to deter and defend against Russia, they are simultaneously trying to avoid drawing premature lessons from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

As evidenced by ongoing infrastructure projects in the Baltic states, Poland and across the eastern flank, border defences between NATO countries and Russia have gained significance. Focusing on anti-personnel mines and Finland, this report contributes to the study of NATO's broader strategy adaptation against Russia, thereby complementing prior FOI-research.

The author is grateful to colleagues at FOI and the interviewees for being generous with their time and insights. A special thank you is due to Olof Kronvall and Henrique Garbino who reviewed an earlier draft of the report. Richard Langlais and Karin Blext provided excellent support in the language review and layout process. Their contributions greatly improved the report.

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Albin Aronsson, Deputy programme manager, Northern European and Transatlantic Security (NOTS)

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Abbreviations

APM	anti-personnel mine(s)
AVM	anti-vehicle mine(s)
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions
EU	European Union
FDF	Finnish Defence Forces
FLF	Forward Land Forces
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MP	Member of parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	National Coalition Party of Finland
SAF	Swedish Armed Forces
SDP	Social Democratic Party of Finland
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

Executive Summary

In 2025, the three Baltic states, Finland, and Poland announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty to reintroduce the anti-personnel mine (APM). The five countries border Russia and cite Russia's aggression and the deterioration in the security situation as the rationale underlying the decision. However, critical questions and points of contention remain unaddressed. The APM is an inhumane weapon, and the Ottawa Treaty has been one of the world's most successful arms control regimes, which calls for robust justification for withdrawal. Furthermore, in Finland, military experts had argued that the APM had been largely replaced by other capabilities. Why were the alternative capabilities no longer considered sufficient? Finally, the timing of the withdrawal decision, three years after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, is puzzling relative to the highlighted Russian threat.

The APM will soon feature in the Finnish, Polish, and Baltic national operational plans. This will have significant implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and allied countries, with military and legal adjustments required to ensure interoperability. Sweden is particularly affected given its extensive bilateral defence cooperation with Finland, its framework nation role in NATO's Forward Land Forces (FLF) in Finland, and its contribution to FLF Latvia. Under current legal obligations, questions of criminal liability could surface where the Swedish Armed Forces were to operate in those countries. Both Sweden and other allies are thus debating the future of the Ottawa Treaty and APM.

This study explores the reasons for the APM reintroduction and its consequences for allies, with Finland as a case study due to its particular relevance for Sweden. The first part of the study identifies and analyses factors that shifted between 2011, when Finland chose to join the Ottawa Treaty, and 2025, when it decided to withdraw. The analysed factors pertain to two groups of actors: *political* (Finnish and foreign policymakers) and *military* (mainly the FDF). The second part maps the reintroduction and acquisition process and considers political, military and judicial implications for allies. The data include primary sources such as government reports and parliamentary debates, secondary sources from news media and external analyses, and interviews with Finnish and Swedish experts and government and military representatives. The research was conducted in January—May 2026.

The anti-personnel mine as a weapon

The APM is defined in the Ottawa Treaty as "a mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons." Its most important military use is for counter-mobility. Additionally, APM can cause casualties, complicate the removal of anti-vehicle mines, "guard" remote areas or render monitoring more effective, and engender a negative psychological effect on the adversary. On the other hand, APM can be

problematic for the employing side due to mapping difficulties, the risk of friendly fire, and a potentially false sense of security. Minelaying furthermore contributes to freezing movement. The strategic effect of extensive use of minefields tends to be that campaigns lose the elements of mobility and surprise. Demining entails humanitarian and financial costs in mined regions.

In Finland, the APM has been thought a well-suited weapon for the societal and territorial context of a conscript army and largely untraversable terrain of Eastern Finland. The weapon also held a special place in Finnish military memory. For these reasons, APM were traditionally regarded as indispensable for Finnish defence. Finland joined the Ottawa Treaty in 2012 amidst international political pressure and domestic controversy. Public debate on the matter never fully ceased, resurfacing repeatedly through the years.

Political and military shifts concerning the APM, 2011–2025

The Finnish decision to leave the Ottawa Treaty resulted from converging political and military developments and reconsiderations. The heightened threat since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine laid the groundwork, and the instability of transatlantic relations reinforced the need for rearmament. From a normative perspective, the Biden Administration broke the APM taboo by sending APM to Ukraine, signalling American toleration of Ukraine violating the Ottawa Treaty. The Trump Administration's apparent disregard for international law further weakened international norms regarding arms control. At the same time, favourable Finnish domestic political conditions—three like-minded parties in government and a committed defence minister—allowed moving the APM initiative forward. These factors illustrate the political driving force of the APM decision, while explaining how normative arguments ended up being downplayed.

Concurrently, the assessment of the military utility of APM evolved over time. Finnish infantry tactics in the 1990s–2010s evolved amid domestic demographic and economic challenges and international military trends towards more expeditionary-style manoeuvre warfare. The APM's role thus diminished, which may have made it easier for the military to give up the APM. Moreover, the foreseen expiry of the Finnish APM in the 2010s and, subsequently, the expiry in the 2020s of the equipment replacing APM, offered economic and technological opportunities for policy change. Strained national finances in the 2020s further facilitated the reintroduction. Finally, expectations of Russia's military strategy and tactics were revised from an apparent preference for strategic strikes to a demonstrated willingness to conduct large-scale conventional war with indiscriminate use of infantry. This provided military grounds for bringing back APM.

Outlook and implications of the APM reintroduction for allies

The acquisition of APM by Finland was initiated immediately after its exit from the Ottawa Treaty in January 2026. The entire process from legal disengagement to deployment could be achieved in less than two years. There is a stated preference for domestic arms manufacturers, both to ensure security of supply and because friendly-minded producers are few globally. Finnish producers have reported interest in the business. No joint acquisitions with the other countries having left the Ottawa Treaty have been announced.

The APM reintroduction constitutes an unusual case of bottom-up-induced strategic revision for NATO. As such, it may be setting a standard for how NATO might manage difficult strategic choices by its member states in the future. The precedent suggests that, at least under conditions of heightened threat, such choices may simply be quietly accepted and adapted to, despite the challenges they may entail. Formally, the APM reintroduction has few implications for allies. NATO does not prohibit its member states from using APM, nor did it need to approve the decision. However, strategic adjustments will likely be needed to ensure interoperability. Sweden is particularly affected owing to its strict reading of the Ottawa Treaty, its relatively recent accession to the Alliance, and its deep military engagement in Finland and Latvia. Under the current regulations, Sweden cannot participate in the planning of activities in which APM will be used, operate in sectors where APM are to be laid, or transport APM. A revision of the Swedish interpretation of the Ottawa Treaty or, alternatively, a Swedish withdrawal from the Treaty, may be expected after the general election of September 2026.

Further observations

The domestic unanimity in Finland regarding the APM in many ways reflects the country's traditional tendencies towards consensus. However, while the decision relied on a high degree of political and public agreement on substantive matters, democratic scrutiny and procedural inclusion of the political opposition were lesser concerns. The APM decision may thus hint at a new type of Finnish defence and security policymaking, where security is increasingly used to justify departures from normal political procedures. This could create tensions in Finnish security policymaking and raise questions about the future of the consensus rule and policy predictability.

Basing the APM decision on lessons from the war in Ukraine involves challenges. First, APM tend to produce wars of attrition with little mobility, whereas the FDF desires manoeuvrability. The compatibility of the two strategic perspectives may be questioned. Second, lessons from Ukraine cannot be applied to any future conflict involving Russia. Russia learns and adapts, and different strategic and geographical contexts entail different conditions for using APM. Also, unlike for Ukraine, interoperability constitutes a challenge for a NATO-allied country such

as Finland. Third, while Finland has underscored its "responsible" use of APM, such responsible practices cannot be guaranteed in wartime. A nuanced approach is thus advised when drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine.

1 Introduction

In the summer of 2025, the three Baltic states, Finland, and Poland announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty, or the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.[1] The withdrawing countries intend to reintroduce the anti-personnel mine (APM) into their military arsenal. All five countries border Russia and cite Russia's aggression and the overall deterioration in the security situation as the rationale underlying the decision.[2] The withdrawals from the Ottawa Treaty took legal effect in the winter of 2025–2026 and will likely require military and legal adjustments by many allies within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The heightened Russian threat undoubtedly encourages the five states to strengthen their defences. However, the explanation does not clarify why and how APM are expected to make a crucial contribution to the countries' security and defence. Moreover, it avoids addressing several critical questions and points of contention, notably as weighty political and military arguments have previously been presented against APM. First, the APM is an inhumane weapon victimising civilians more often than military personnel.[3] The Ottawa Treaty has been one of the world's most successful arms control regimes; until the withdrawals, 166 states were parties to it, and its underlying Campaign to Ban Landmines was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997. Withdrawal might therefore have been expected to bring about significant reputational damage. Indeed, the decision was widely publicised internationally and raised much concern and criticism among humanitarian, human rights, and disarmament organisations. The decision could therefore be expected to have been robustly justified.

Second, military experts in the countries have previously argued that the APM are largely replaceable with other capabilities. For instance, the Finnish Defence Forces (FDF) were allocated EUR 200 million in additional funding for replacement acquisitions when Finland acceded to the Ottawa Treaty. The new equipment was claimed to adequately substitute for most capabilities that were lost with

[1] *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (Ottawa Treaty), September 18, 1997, 2056 U.N.T.S. 211.

[2] Ministry of National Defence of Poland. "Statement by the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Polish Ministers of Defence on Withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention," March 18, 2025, https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/statement-by-the-estonian-latvian-lithuanian-and-polish-ministers-of-defence-on-withdrawal-from-the-ottawa-convention. Also, Ukraine announced its suspension of its adherence to the Treaty, although as party to an active conflict, it cannot legally withdraw. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, "Statement of the MFA of Ukraine on the Decision to Suspension from the Ottawa Convention," June 29, 2025, https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/zayava-mzs-shchodo-rishennya-pro-vihid-ukrayini-z-ottavskoyi-konvenciyi.

[3] International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025* (Geneva: ICBL-CMC, December 2025).

the APM and to provide an overall stronger capability.[4] This raises questions about why the alternative capabilities are no longer thought sufficient. Third, the timing of the withdrawal decision is puzzling relative to the highlighted Russian threat. Unlike, for instance, the Finnish and Swedish applications for NATO membership, which followed soon after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the APM decision was taken only three years later, with no immediately evident preceding development on the battlefield.

APM will feature prominently in the Finnish, Polish, and Baltic national operational plans in the future alongside other recent border defence initiatives. This will have significant bearing on NATO, individual allied countries, and joint operational planning. Understanding the underlying rationales for the APM decision, and thereby the intended use of the weapon, will be important as allies make legal and military adjustments to ensure interoperability in the future. Sweden is among the allies most affected, given its extensive bilateral defence cooperation with Finland, its framework nation role in NATO's Forward Land Forces (FLF) in Finland, and its contribution to FLF Latvia. Under current legal obligations, questions of criminal liability could surface if the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF) were to cooperate with Finnish or Baltic troops in those countries.[5] The debate regarding the future of the Ottawa Treaty and APM has therefore also arisen in Sweden. Arguments for withdrawal have also been heard in other NATO member states. An analysis of the consequences of the APM reintroduction in the five NATO countries for the Alliance in general and for Sweden in particular is therefore in order. On a theoretical level, the APM question holds relevance notably for research on international norm erosion and arms control, strategic adjustment in military alliances, and, given the uncommunicative and strongly executive-driven policy process witnessed in Finland, policymaking securitisation.

The driving factors of the APM reintroduction and the consequences for NATO allies have not been assessed extensively and systematically.[6] Previous analyses of the Ottawa Treaty withdrawals have instead focused primarily on the ethical and

[4] Tulikukka de Fresnes and Tuomas Rimpiläinen, "Puolustusvoimien komentaja pani omalta osaltaan pisteen miinakeskustelulle: Jalkaväkimiinat eivät ole meille ajankohtainen asia" [The commander of the Defence Forces put an end to the mine discussion for his part: Anti-personnel mines are not a topical matter for us], *Yle*, March 7, 2022, https://yle.fi/a/3-12338148.

[5] Elina Kervinen, "Sodan tullen Suomella olisi yllättävä ongelma: Ruotsalaissotilaat eivät saa koskea jalkaväkimiinoihin" [In case of war, Finland would have an unexpected problem: Swedish soldiers are not allowed to touch anti-personnel mines], *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 9, 2026, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000011860927.html.

[6] For a notable exception, see Robin Häggblom, "Landminornas återkomst" [The return of the landmines], *Kungl Krigsvetenskapsakademien*, December 21, 2024, https://kkrva.se/landminornas-aterkomst/.

legal aspects of the matter.[7] Meanwhile, academic research on the APM in general has been sparse and has principally dealt with the weapon's use in non-conventional warfare and in non-Western countries.[8]

1.1 Case, research questions, and theoretical framework

To capture the shifting rationales surrounding the APM reintroduction in a nuanced way, the analysis focuses on a single case. Finland is selected as the case study due to the particular relevance of Finland and Finnish defence for Sweden. Finland is also interesting given its history of neutrality and its aspiration to be a reputable Nordic proponent of disarmament; in this sense, its withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty is somewhat more surprising than that of the other four countries. Although the single-case focus limits the generalisability of the analysis, it invites and lays the ground for further comparative research in the future.

The research questions guiding the study are:

1. Shifting underlying factors:
    a. Which key factors shifted between 2011, when Finland chose to join the Ottawa Treaty, to 2025, when the country decided to withdraw from it?
    b. How can these shifts help explain the Finnish withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty?
2. What are the likely near-term implications of Finland's reintroduction of APM for Finland itself and its NATO allies, particularly Sweden?

The first research question seeks to identify and assess the main factors that may have influenced Finnish policymakers' decision-making, leading Finland to join the Ottawa Treaty in 2011 and withdraw from it in 2025. As the analysis focuses on accounting for change, the interest is in factors that shifted in some way over the period. These factors are categorised into those pertaining primarily to *political*

[7] William H. Boothby, "Finland, Territorial Security, and Anti-personnel Mines," *Articles of War*, Lieber Institute, West Point, December 6, 2024, https://lieber.westpoint.edu/finland-territorial-security-anti-personnel-mines/; Sally Longworth, "Anti-personnel mines: An overview of the legal regulation in light of recent developments," FOI Memo 8857 (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency—FOI, 2025).

[8] Tanisha M. Fazal and Margarita Konaev, "Homelands versus Minelands: Why Do Armed Groups Commit to the Laws of War?" *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 2 (2019): 149–68; Henrique Garbino, "Rebels against Mines? Legitimacy and Restraint on Landmine Use in the Philippines," *Security Studies* 32, no. 3 (2023): 505–36; Henrique Garbino, "'It Wasn't Because of Human Rights:' Exploring the Limited Use of Landmines by Colombian Paramilitary Groups," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (2024): 1–26. For a notable exception, see Stephen D. Biddle, Julia Klare, Johnathan Wallis, and Ivan Oelrich, "Controlling Anti-personnel Landmines," *Contemporary Security Policy* 19, no. 3 (1998): 27–71.

actors (Finnish and foreign policymakers) and those pertaining to *military actors* (mainly, the FDF). Humanitarian and legal factors are assessed insofar as they inform these actors' views. Meanwhile, APM are assumed to remain vicious and dangerous to civilians, societies, and the environment. Similarly, international law remained unchanged regarding states' responsibilities relative to their commitments. Developments in these domains are therefore left outside the scope of the study.

The second research question maps and analyses the reintroduction process as it stands in mid-2026 and the implications of the reintroduction decision for NATO allies and collective defence. Dimensions of interest include the APM acquisition process as well as allied political reactions and military and legal adaptation.

1.2 Methods and data

The first, two-part research question is investigated as an exploratory qualitative causal case study.[9] The data used include primary sources such as government reports and parliamentary debates, secondary sources from news media and external analyses, and interviews. Probable key factors underlying the abandonment and reintroduction of APM were first inductively identified from primary and secondary sources. Then, connections between the probable key factors and the APM policy choice were checked for temporal sequence and against a synthesis of expert views. The conclusions are based on plausible and well-informed reasoning, but have not benefited from access to classified official sources. The analysis thus does not cover all potentially relevant factors. Nevertheless, the ambition is to provide a nuanced and balanced account of likely influential elements underlying the APM decision.

The second research question is more forward-looking and hypothetical, and the analysis encompasses an evaluative synthesis of expert views. The data were collected from news sources and interviews. A total of nine semi-structured interviews covering both research questions were carried out with Finnish and Swedish experts, government officials, and military representatives. Interviews took place in person in Stockholm and Enköping as well as online and by telephone in February–April 2026. Interview data were used, on the one hand, as factual information to complement public sources, and on the other hand, as in-depth and nuanced expert analysis and assessment.

[9] John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

1.3 Delimitations

The study pertains to anti-personnel mines intended for use in Finland. Other related weapons and weapon systems, such as anti-vehicle mines, booby traps, improvised explosive devices, and anti-handling devices, are not covered.[10] Furthermore, the study focuses on APM use by state actors and in the context of inter-state conflict. The use of APM in non-conventional warfare and against civilian targets is not addressed, despite the fact that such usage has been prevalent in recent decades. The indiscriminate nature of APM and the civilian casualties they cause, with 90 per cent of the victims civilians in 2024, are the predominant reasons for the international ban.[11] These features and effects are recognised even as they remain outside the scope of the study.

1.4 Outline

The report proceeds as follows. First, it defines what APM are and introduces their key features and uses as weapons, both generally and in the particular case of Finland. Second, it analyses the Finnish domestic and international political developments underlying the abandonment and reintroduction of APM. Third, it looks at key military developments impacting the perceived usefulness of APM in Finland over the period of interest. A further analytical chapter puts the APM into a broader and forward-looking European and NATO perspective and details challenges and potential ways forward for NATO allies. The final chapter summarises the analysis and presents some further interpretations of the topic.

[10] For definitions of the different weapons, see International Mine Action Standards, "IMAS 04.10 Glossary of mine action terms, definitions and abbreviations," 2nd ed, January 1, 2003 (Amendment 12, October 25, 2024), https://www.mineactionstandards.org/standards/04-10/.

[11] International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025*).

2 The APM as a weapon

This chapter explains how the APM is used as a weapon by state actors in conventional military strategy and tactics and examines its traditional role in the context of Finland.

2.1 Characteristics and uses

The APM is defined in the Ottawa Treaty as "a mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure, or kill one or more persons."[12] Activation by the victim is thus a defining characteristic of the APM. The two main types of APM are blast mines, triggered by the victim stepping on them and usually seriously injuring rather than killing them, and larger fragmentation mines, which project shrapnel over a wider vicinity. Landmines in a modern guise were developed in the 19th century and introduced into production and used in battle on a large scale during World War I.[13] Their first use was as anti-tank weaponry by retreating German forces in 1918. The APM was developed to prevent anti-vehicle mines (AVM) from being easily removed, and later to counter dismounted infantry.[14] Historically, the APM has been judged as playing a critical role in combat, for example in key World War II battles such as El Alamein, Kursk, and Omaha Beach.[15] The APM is frequently referred to as "the perfect soldier": it is cheap and easy to manufacture on a large scale, to transport, and to install, and it can remain functional without maintenance for decades after being emplaced.[16]

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[12] Ottawa Treaty, Article 2(1).

[13] Earlier versions of mines were already being used in the Crimean War 1853–1856 and the American Civil War 1861–1865. Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Torpedoes and the Global Development of Landmine Warfare*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2023).

[14] May, James G. "New Technology Required to Implement U.S. Anti-personnel Landmine Policy." USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, 1998, 1; Nethery, Nicholas R. "Evolution of United States Military Landmine Doctrine and Employment." Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2015, 22.

[15] J.F. Crandley Jr., R.J. Greenwalt Jr., D.E. Magnoli, and A.S. Randazzo, "Battlefield Utility of Antipersonnel Landmines and Proposed Alternatives (Analysis in Support of the NATO SAS-023 APM Study)" (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, U.S. Department of Energy, 2002), v–vi. On the other hand, historical cases of remarkable APM failures can also be identified, such as the French Maginot Line in the 1930s and Iraqi mines in the Gulf War in 1991; see Fernando Arias, host, *Konflikt*, "Personminornas återkomst i en ny tid" [The return of the anti-personnel mine in a new era], *Sveriges Radio*, May 1, 2026, 40 min 30 sec, https://www.sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/personminornas-aterkomst-i-en-ny-tid; International Committee of the Red Cross, *Anti-Personnel Landmines*, 40–41; *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti* [Interim report of the working group for the anti-personnel mine investigation of the Ministry of Defence], December 19, 2003, 19.

[16] The characterisation is often attributed to Pol Pot of the Khmer Rouge. See Matthew Breay Bolton, *Political Minefields: The Struggle against Automated Killing*. I.B. Tauris, 2020.

The APM is essentially considered a defensive weapon and to be especially useful for the weaker side in a conflict. However, it can also be employed by the aggressor and the stronger party. APM have several uses, of which the most important is contributing to counter-mobility alongside AVM and other natural and man-made barriers and obstacles. APM impede enemy movement, denying it access, stopping it, slowing it down, and channelling it. In active battle, delaying the attacker's advance can significantly influence the outcome of a firefight. Because the attacker is typically moving while the defender remains stationary in battle positions, the attacker has a comparatively less stable firing position from which to engage a smaller target, while also being more exposed to fire. This gives an advantage to the defender as long as the attacker remains at some distance. The advantage decreases the closer the attacker advances. A minefield keeping the attacker at a distance for longer thus benefits the defender. Minefields also allow better use of indirect fire. Against a moving target, the utility of indirect fire is limited, as firing takes time. A minefield is therefore useful for stopping the attacker and keeping it stationary, "fixing" it, long enough to deliver indirect fire.[17] Additionally, APM causes casualties to the enemy, particularly in combination with other weapon systems. In terms of military tactical theory, the APM thus constitutes an element of firepower as well as a factor of movement.[18]

In addition to its direct utility in a firefight, APM offer several other potentially useful features. First, as per its original use, it makes AVM removal more difficult, slowing down mechanised units. Second, it can be used to passively "guard" remote areas that are difficult to monitor, or to render active guarding more effective and efficient by giving an early warning to the defender upon activation. This can be especially useful in conditions where monitoring is difficult, such as at night and in fringe areas. Third, it engenders a psychological effect on the adversary. Because of the uncontrollability, risk, uncertainty, and inability to fight back that APM entail, troops hitting a minefield presumably experience significant anxiety, and the horrific nature of injuries combined with the inevitability of injury induce terror. The resulting cautiousness will contribute to slowing advances. The effect may also extend to future advances, as the advancing actor can never be sure of where minefields may have been laid.[19]

On the other hand, several of the benefits of APM have been questioned, including their general strategic significance.[20] For AVM protection, APM have arguably

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[17] Crandley et al., "Battlefield Utility," iii, 1—4.

[18] Crandley et al., "Battlefield Utility," 1.

[19] Blue Trident Analysis, *Jalkaväkimiinojen psykologiset vaikutukset: Tutkimus jalkaväkimiinojen psykologisista vaikutuksista Ukrainan sodassa* [Psychological effects of anti-personnel mines: A study of the psychological effects of anti-personnel mines in the war in Ukraine], 2025.

[20] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Anti-Personnel Landmines: Friend or Foe? A study of the military use and effectiveness of anti-personnel mines*. (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1997); International Committee

been rendered largely obsolete by anti-handling devices. For guarding, there is evidence of APM use proving counterproductive, not preventing infiltration while providing a false sense of security and protection and leading minelayers to let their guard down.[21] Finally, the importance of the psychological effects has also largely been assumed rather than confirmed by scientifically robust research. The limited research that has been conducted suggests that APM do not always cause significant psychological effects, nor do they necessarily stall missions; rather, the operational effects depend on the type of mission.[22]

From the perspective of the employing side, the military downsides of APM include the difficulty of tracking them appropriately in the turmoil of war. APM may also be displaced by weather events such as flooding. Especially when poorly mapped, APM pose significant risks of friendly fire during dismounted manoeuvring.[23] Partly because of the illusory sense of security and the risk of falling victim to one's own weapons, minelaying may contribute to freezing movement and complicating attacks by both the defender and the attacker.[24] In this vein, the strategic effect of extensive use of minefields tends to be that campaigns shift from manoeuvre to attritional warfare, losing the elements of mobility and surprise.[25] The tactical utility of APM also depends on the type of mine. For instance, mines with features such as self-neutralisation and scatterability often have a narrower use than traditional persistent mines. While potentially advantageous for slowing an enemy during retrograde defensive manoeuvres or temporarily denying access to key infrastructure, they are less suited for long-term territorial or border defence.[26] However, political discourse often simultaneously and contradictorily highlights both the politically more acceptable self-neutralising mines and the function of long-term area denial. Finally, in the post-conflict context, the humanitarian costs as well as the financial costs of demining are evidently borne in the mined regions, regardless of which party to the conflict originally emplaced the mines.

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of the Red Cross, *Report on Observations and Conclusions from a Review of the ICRC Study "Anti-Personnel Landmines, Friend or Foe?"* (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2004).

[21] International Committee of the Red Cross, *Report on Observations and Conclusions*, 2.

[22] Crandley et al., "Battlefield Utility," 6–7; Eugenia M. Kolasinski, "The Psychological Effects of Anti-Personnel Landmines: A Standard to which Alternatives can be Compared" (United States Military Academy, 1999), iii.

[23] May, "New Technology Required," 5–6.

[24] Jyri Kosola, *Teknologisen kehityksen vaikutuksia sodankäyntiin 2015–2025* [Effects of technological development on warfare 2015–2025], Julkaisusarja 4, no. 3 (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, Sotatekniikan laitos, 2011), 30.

[25] Nethery, "Evolution," 7.

[26] Interview 1.

Until recent experiences from Russia's war against Ukraine, the APM seemingly retained its use in insurgencies but had lost significance in conventional warfare.[27] At most, 166 countries have been parties to the Ottawa Treaty. Among state actors, only Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, and Russia used APM in 2024–2025.[28] At the same time, neither China, Russia, nor the US has signed the ban. Great powers use APM in conflict in varying ways and to various degrees. For instance, US strategy historically tends to place little emphasis on landmines when on the offensive but much more so, albeit inconsistently, when on the defensive.[29] Reportedly, the US has not used APM since the Gulf War in 1991.[30] Meanwhile, Russia has used APM extensively, notably in its war against Ukraine.

2.2 The APM in Finnish defence

In Finland, the APM has often been argued to be a particularly well-suited weapon for the Finnish societal and territorial context. Finnish defence policy and military doctrine encompass the territorial defence of the entire country. Its comparatively large territory with a long border with Russia, combined with a sparse population, has motivated a large army based on universal male conscription. The setup entails challenges and requirements to which APM are arguably well suited. First, the costs of supplying and maintaining a large army are high, and so the troops must be equipped with low-cost matériel. Second, conscripts cannot be as highly trained and specialised as professional soldiers, so their weapons must be relatively easy to use. Cheap and simple, the APM is seen as answering both of these calls.

The APM is also often argued to be particularly appropriate for the Finnish terrain, climate, and strategic conditions. Eastern Finland, bordering Russia, is largely covered by forest, swampland, and lakes. In winter, snow also makes the terrain more difficult to traverse. For mechanised units in particular, passable roads are few, which makes minelaying along accessible routes a particularly efficient and effective way to slow and manipulate, or channel, the adversary's movement. Finally, the APM has also held a special place in Finnish military memory owing to experiences from the Continuation War of 1941–1944, in which APM were widely used and played an important role. This experience contributed to its systematic use in defence planning in subsequent decades, including for the pur-

[27] Tommi Koivula, "Sodan kaikuja: Norjan ja Suomen henkilömiinaretoriikka kansainvälisten mediaprosessien ilmentäjänä 1995–2001" [Echoes of war: The anti-personnel mine rhetoric in Norway and Finland as an expression of international media processes 1995–2001], (PhD diss., University of Tampere, 2004), 112.

[28] International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2025*, 1.

[29] Nethery, "Evolution," 7.

[30] US Department of State, "Briefing on the United States' Updated Anti-Personnel Landmine Policy," June 21, 2022, https://2021-2025.state.gov/briefing-on-the-united-states-updated-anti-personnel-landmine-policy/.

poses of guerrilla-type warfare in the event of occupation.[31] For these reasons and purposes, APM were traditionally regarded as indispensable for Finnish defence.

[31] Koivula, "Sodan kaikuja," 177–178; Marko Palokangas, "Räjähtävää tyhjyyttä—sissisodankäynnin menetelmät ja käsitteet osana Suomen sotilaallista puolustusta toisen maailmansodan jälkeen" [Explosive emptiness—methods and concepts of guerrilla warfare as part of Finland's military defence after World War II], *Tiede ja ase* 68 (2010): 148–173. In the Winter War of 1939–1940, mines were not yet widely used; interview 6.

3 Political shifts 2011–2025

This chapter presents shifts in domestic and international politics from the early 2010s to the 2020s, in the context of which the APM decisions were made.

3.1 Domestic politics

Given the important role traditionally assigned to the APM in Finland, abandoning the weapon was politically controversial even in the post-Cold War years of disarmament. Large political factions opposed joining the Ottawa Treaty, and the process was long, starting in the 1990s and concluding only in 2012. Ultimately, international political pressure grew too strong, notably from within the European Union (EU) and in relation to Finland's international and domestic profile as an advocate of arms control.[32] Finland voted to join the Ottawa Treaty in 2011, with entry into force in 2012. Upon entry, it was the last of the EU member states to do so.

The initiative held something of a leftist brand, personified notably by President Tarja Halonen (2000–2012) and Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja (2000–2007, 2011–2015) of the Social Democratic Party (SDP).[33] Nevertheless, by the time the Treaty was signed, banning APM had garnered support across the political spectrum, and all parties save for the populist Finns Party had, in successive governments, contributed to the preparations for the decision. The proposal was approved in a vote during the mandate of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen of the centre-right National Coalition Party (NCP). The Finns Party and parts of the Centre Party, in opposition at the time, voted against, while several centre-right members of parliament (MPs) in the government coalition only grudgingly voted in favour. Overall, the political backing was moderate, with 110 votes for, 47 against, and 42 absent.[34]

Beyond political decision-makers, the role of the FDF in influencing the political process must be particularly noted. The FDF generally keeps its distance from politics, acting in public more as an expert consulting body than as an active lobbyist. This practice is prescribed both by custom and by law, as active-duty military representatives may not run for political office at the national level, and

[32] *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*, 14–15.

[33] Teija Sutinen, "Suomi päätti luopua jalkaväkimiinoista kolmetoista vuotta sitten—Näin siihen päädyttiin" [Finland decided to give up anti-personnel mines 13 years ago—This is how it was concluded], *Helsingin Sanomat*, November 27, 2024, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000010860518.html.

[34] MTV3-STT, "Suomi kieltää jalkaväkimiinat" [Finland prohibits anti-personnel mines], *MTV Uutiset*, November 25, 2011, https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/suomi-kieltaa-jalkavakimiinat/1935256.

public comments by soldiers on policy matters are often frowned upon.[35] At the same time, public trust in the FDF (67 per cent in 2026) is the highest accorded to all public institutions in Finland, far beyond, for instance, the President (52 per cent), the police (51 per cent), the government (12 per cent), or Parliament (9 per cent).[36] The FDF's position thus tends to influence Finnish public opinion on matters of national security. On the APM question, the FDF and the officer corps opposed joining the Ottawa Treaty.[37] Although the FDF subsequently, as was customary, adapted its public position to the prevailing political line, the public remained aware of its original stance, and public debate on the matter never fully ceased, even after the country's accession to the Ottawa Treaty.

Against this backdrop, it is notable that citizens' initiatives[38] to reintroduce APM surfaced in 2014, 2018, 2022, and 2024. On each of these occasions, the initiatives were dismissed, both for legal-technical reasons regarding international treaties and because of the alleged lack of military utility.[39] The latter position was maintained even after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. A week after the invasion, President Sauli Niinistö stated in an interview that Finland would "have use for APM," yet he did not explicitly comment on withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty. Prime Minister Sanna Marin said that there had been "no discussion about withdrawing," while several other party leaders rejected or refused to comment on the matter.[40] The FDF stuck to the official mainstream political-military line, according to which national defence had no need for APM.[41] Remarkably, even after the parliamentary election of April 2023, the reintroduction of APM was not included in the government programme. This was despite all three prospec-

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[35] Lasse Lipsanen, "Suomessa sotilaat eivät politikoi" [In Finland, soldiers do not politick], *Ruotuväki*, March 10, 2016, https://ruotuvaki.fi/-/suomessa-sotilaat-eivat-politikoi.

[36] SuomiAreena and the Nordic Council of Ministers, "Luottamus yhteiskunnassa: Pohjoismaisen tutkimuksen Suomen osuus" [Trust in society: Finland's part of the Nordic study] March 19, 2026, https://www.suomiareena.fi/app/uploads/2026/03/Luottamus-yhteiskunnassa-Suomiareena_FIN.pdf.

[37] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Henkilömiinojen korvaaminen etenee Suomessa erittäin nopeasti" [The replacement of anti-personnel mines proceeds very swiftly in Finland], *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 18, 2011, https://www.hs.fi/suomi/art-2000002505115.html.

[38] Citizens' initiatives (*kansalaisaloite; medborgarinitiativ*) are law proposals or motions for drafting proposals that must be subjected to ordinary parliamentary legislative procedure, provided that the initiative has collected 50,000 signatures within a period of six months.

[39] Government of Finland, "Hallituksen esitys eduskunnalle jalkaväkimiinojen käytön, varastoinnin, tuotannon ja siirron kieltämisestä ja niiden hävittämisestä tehdyn yleissopimuksen irtisanomiseksi ja siihen liittyviksi laeiksi" [Government proposal to Parliament to leave the the convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction and related laws], HE 56/2025 vp (2025); de Fresnes and Rimpiläinen, "Puolustusvoimien komentaja."

[40] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Miinoille on käyttöä ja 'hyvä olla varastossakin,' presidentti Sauli Niinistö sanoi kielletyistä jalkaväkimiinoista—Näin puolueet kommentoivat" [There is use for mines and "good to have in stock too," President Sauli Niinistö said about prohibited anti-personnel mines—Here's how the parties comment], *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 3, 2022, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000008653707.html.

[41] de Fresnes and Rimpiläinen, "Puolustusvoimien komentaja."

tive government partners, the NCP, the Finns Party, and the Christian Democratic Party, being largely or entirely in favour of the reintroduction.[42]

Evidently, neither public opinion, the weakened national security situation, nor a generally pro-APM government, was alone or together a sufficient condition for the reintroduction. However, they were all likely necessary to allow the initiative to be pushed forward by driven individuals, in this case, particularly Minister of Defence Antti Häkkänen, a reserve officer trained as a combat engineer and critical of the mine ban from the beginning. Häkkänen took strong ownership of the initiative,[43] and the reintroduction received a strong boost from Chief of Defence Janne Jaakkola, who took a stand on the matter in a public interview in November 2024. Although cautious, Jaakkola's statement marked a somewhat exceptional pronouncement on behalf of the FDF and constituted a clear break with the FDF's take on APM over the past decade, directly contradicting Jaakkola's predecessor, according to whom FDF practices and concepts had changed so that APM were not "topical."[44] Jaakkola's positioning arguably boosted the credibility of the idea in a way that a declaration by a political leader could not have done.[45] The extent to which the statement was coordinated with Defence Minister Häkkänen is unclear, but the Chief of Defence undoubtedly was aware of the Minister's preferences.

At the same time, the strong public backing together with the generally threatening security environment likely contributed to the opposition parties being divided on the matter. While it might have been difficult for a leftist or centrist coalition, such as the Marin Government in power in 2022, to start actively driving a similar initiative, it was equally difficult for it to strongly object to the initiative while in opposition. Only the Left Alliance clearly opposed the decision, while the Green League was split, and several SDP members were absent from the vote

[42] Robert Sundman and Joona Aaltonen, "Ministeriöt hallitusneuvottelijoille: Suomen ei ole syytä irtautua Ottawan sopimuksesta" [Ministries to government negotiators: Finland should not withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty], *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 16, 2023, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000009590449.html.

[43] Joonas Immonen, "Ulos Ottawasta" [Out of Ottawa], *Ilta-Sanomat*, May 14, 2025, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000011161874.html.

[44] STT, "Puolustusvoimain komentaja Timo Kivinen: Jalkaväkimiinat eivät ole Suomelle ajankohtainen asia" [Commander of the Defence Forces Timo Kivinen: Anti-personnel mines are not a topical matter for Finland], *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 7, 2022, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000008664036.html.

[45] Maria Nykänen and Vesa Kallionpää. "Puolustusvoimain komentaja Janne Jaakkola haluaa keskustelua jalkaväkimiinoista: 'Nyt turvallisuusympäristö on aivan erilainen'" [Commander of the Defence Forces Janne Jaakkola wants discussion about anti-personnel mines: "Now the security environment is completely different"], *MTV Uutiset*, November 23, 2024, https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/puolustusvoimain-komentaja-janne-jaakkola-haluaa-keskustelua-jalkavakimiinoista-nyt-turvallisuusymparisto-on-aivan-erilainen/9052090#gs.ildfbv; interview 4.

in apparent protest against enforced party discipline. Ultimately, a distinct majority in the opposition voted in favour of the withdrawal. In justifying their decision, the opposition strongly emphasised national security and the FDF's (classified) analysis of the utility of APM.[46]

3.2 International politics

While Russia's aggression evidently heightened the general threat level in Finland, other international political developments also importantly factored in the Finnish APM decision. Among the most important political factors was the positioning of the United States.

The opening of a window of opportunity for the reintroduction of APM arguably depended on the United States. As early as November 2024, the Biden Administration had decided to provide Ukraine with APM, arguing that the Ukrainians "have a need for things that can help slow down that effort on the part of the Russians."[47] The decision marked a shift from the Biden Administration's earlier position in 2022, whereby the United States would not transfer, export, or use APM anywhere but on the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, accepting the delivery of APM meant that Ukraine violated the Ottawa Treaty. The Treaty stipulates that no country engaged in an armed conflict may leave the Treaty, and Ukraine had been a party to it since 2005. The US's de facto blessing for Ukraine violating the Ottawa Treaty may be considered as having broken a taboo surrounding the reintroduction of APM in other countries as well.[48] In this context, it is notable that the Finnish public debate on the matter, sparked by the aforementioned interview statement by Chief of Defence Jaakkola, started at approximately the same time as the Biden Administration's APM announcement in November 2024. In addition, another taboo-breaking precedent had been set by Lithuania's decision in July 2024 to withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM). The decision did not give rise to any domestic and only limited international backlash, and it was also preceded by the Biden Administration

[46] Parliament received access to the analysis by early June. However, it remains classified and unavailable to the public. Eduskunta, Pöytäkirjan asiakohta PTK 59/2025 vp, June 3, 2025; Eduskunta, Pöytäkirjan asiakohta PTK 67/2025 vp, June 16, 2025.

[47] Doniyor Mutalov, "U.S. to Supply Landmines to Ukraine," *Arms Control Association*, 2024, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2024-12/news/us-supply-landmines-ukraine.

[48] For the APM taboo, see Richard Price, "International Norms and the Mines Taboo: Pulls toward Compliance," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 5, no. 3 (1998): 105–23. For the dissolution of international norms, see Diana Panke and Ulrich Petersohn, "Why International Norms Disappear Sometimes," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 4 (2012): 719–42.

sending cluster munitions to Ukraine in 2023 (with neither party a signatory to the CCM).[49]

It seems likely that the US's role as the upholder of norms had been crucial for political caution in the APM question in Finland. The timing of the start of the Finnish debate can be contrasted with the fact that the war in Ukraine and pressure from public opinion had not been enough to make a generally supportive government immediately promote the change of policy.[50] This may testify to the strength of the international norm of weapons control and Western liberal democracies' reluctance to break such norms. Strikingly, Finnish MPs across the political spectrum, including factions typically critical of international norms, emphasised in the debates of 2025 that Finland is a "responsible" user of APM and that the country would continue to work for mine clearing and disarmament around the world. If not about the norms themselves, at the very least, policymakers thus seemed concerned about national reputation.

In addition, American political developments greatly influenced threat perceptions and calculations in Europe and in Finland more generally. The US had long signalled a lessening focus on the defence of Europe, but Donald Trump's reelection and presidency added increasing urgency to the matter in 2024–2025. Based on the experience of his first presidential term (2017–2021) as well as his rhetoric in the years between his two terms, turbulence in transatlantic relations was widely anticipated. Before the public debate started, the first steps towards the reintroduction of APM in Finland were in fact taken in the summer of 2024, when Defence Minister Häkkänen quietly commissioned the FDF to investigate the issue. The ensuing report falls within the remit of standard ministerial investigations[51] and may not have been commissioned specifically with a view to Trump's possible return to power. However, the uncertainty regarding US commitment likely contributed to the generally accelerating defence preparations. One

[49] Justinas Žilinskas, "When Security Prevails: Lithuania Votes to Withdraw from the Convention on Cluster Munitions," *Articles of War*, Lieber Institute, West Point, August 13, 2024, https://lieber.westpoint.edu/when-security-prevails-lithuania-votes-withdraw-convention-cluster-munitions/; Kathryn Armstrong and Antoinette Radford, "Cluster bombs: Unease grows over US sending cluster bombs to Ukraine," *BBC News*, July 9, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66144153.

[50] Note that the citizens' initiative of 2022 garnered the required 50,000 signatures in less than two weeks and the one in 2024 in less than one week; see "Jalkaväkimiinakiellosta irtautuminen ja jalkaväkimiinojen käytön, varastoinnin, tuotannon ja siirron salliminen" [Withdrawal from the ban on anti-personnel mines and the permission of anti-personnel mine use, stockpiling, production, and transfer], kansalaisaloite.fi, February 24, 2022, https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/9991; "Suomen irtautuminen Ottawan sopimuksesta" [Finland's withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty], kansalaisaloite.fi, December 6, 2024, https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/14459.

[51] Interview 5.

analyst bluntly assessed that if Finland really trusted American backing, it would not have brought back APM.[52]

Subsequently, as the first weeks of the second Trump term in early 2025 left Europe in "shock and awe," the commitment of the United States to NATO and European security definitely seemed to falter. Consequently, Finnish policy-makers were extraordinarily motivated to find defence solutions that could be introduced urgently and relatively cheaply. President Trump's re-election and his administration's policies in the following months also seemed to signal a Zeitgeist that disregarded international law and commitments, further loosening norms surrounding APM.[53] It is within this context that the Finnish government officially declared its intention to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty in April 2025. Steps towards the same end were taken approximately simultaneously in Poland and the Baltic countries, whose joint announcement of withdrawal plans was published on 18 March 2025. Some information exchange may have taken place between all five countries at the political and/or military level. However, there was reportedly no administrative coordination. Finland neither co-signed the Polish-Baltic announcement, nor was invited to do so; reportedly, if it had been, it still might have preferred an independent process based solely on purely national prerequisites.[54] Nevertheless, according to Finnish estimates, the other four countries may have delayed coming forward with their intentions until the Finnish debate was well underway.[55] Indeed, some Finnish political representtatives have even prided themselves on the fact that Finland, as an established and well-reputed liberal democracy, has set an example for other countries by taking such steps.[56]

After a brief and relatively consensual process, the Finnish government's proposal passed in Parliament on 19 June with 157 votes for, 18 against, and 24 absent. Finland officially deposited its instrument of withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty with the United Nations on 10 July 2025, with the withdrawal taking effect six months from that date, on 10 January 2026. The Baltic countries deposited their instruments of withdrawal on 27 June, with the decision taking effect on 27 December 2025, and the corresponding dates for Poland were 26 August 2025 and 26 February 2026. The slightly different timelines depended on domestic legislative procedures.

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[52] Interview 3.

[53] For an analysis of Trump and the nuclear taboo, see Nina Tannenwald, "How Strong Is the Nuclear Taboo Today?" *Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2018): 89–109.

[54] Interview 5.

[55] Interview 4, 5.

[56] Fernando Arias, host, *Konflikt*.

4 Military shifts 2011–2025

With the previous chapter outlining the political conditions underlying the Finnish APM decision, this chapter turns to military factors. An analysis of such factors is particularly important given the political leaders' strong emphasis on them. The three main military factors identified concern Finnish infantry tactics, APM replacement technologies, and, most importantly, Russia's military strategy and tactics. Each of the factors also ties in different ways to lessons from the war in Ukraine. The chapter presents and discusses in turn how each of these factors connects to the abandonment and/or reintroduction of APM.

4.1 Evolving Finnish military tactics

The first development influencing the perceived military value of APM relates to the evolution of Finnish military tactics, in which different tactical approaches gave rise to different evaluations of APM over time. A first shift in the 1990s–2010s was largely endogenous and only indirectly dependent on Russia, and it facilitated the abandonment of APM. Meanwhile, since the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine, an exogenously induced shift may be underway – again increasing the relevance of APM at the tactical level.

In simplified terms, Finnish infantry tactics during the Cold War were based on positional defence along the border, with the aim of holding and controlling terrain. However, these tactics have been slowly revised since the 1990s, owing to both resource scarcity and military preferences. One important factor driving the revision was that Finland faced, and continues to face, a steady demographic decline. By the early 2010s, it became evident that the smaller conscript cohorts could not accomplish the task of defending the entire territory of the country relying on the traditional tactics: the areas of responsibility allocated to the decreasing number of troops grew too large and the distances too long.[57] The conclusion was that operational plans would over time need to be adapted to smaller cohorts. Tactical revision thus became increasingly urgent.

At the same time, the end of the Cold War and military technological developments also brought shifts in Finnish military culture and tactics. The influence of manoeuvre warfare thinking from the West, especially the United States and NATO, grew stronger among the military leadership, prompting tactical adaptation. The dominant military reasoning emphasised ideas of future warfare relying

[57] Peltoniemi, Rainer. "Maavoimien taistelu 2015—Maavoimien uudistetun taistelutavan suurin muutos ilmenee joukkojen tavassa taistella" [Army battle 2015—The biggest shift of the army land warfare doctrine reform is manifest in how troops fight], in *Maavoimien taistelu 2015 sosiologisesta näkökulmasta: Suomen Sotilassosiologinen Seura 20 vuotta* [Army battle 2015 from a sociological perspective: Finnish Military Sociological Society 20 years], edited by Risto Sinkko, 28–37. Tampere: Juvenes Print, 2015, 29

on smaller, more efficient, and more mobile high-tech forces capable of engaging in both conventional and non-conventional warfare. Advanced and increasingly expensive military equipment, including intensified and more precise firepower, seemed to be changing the battlefield. At the same time, traditional uses of mines were believed to be losing some relevance with the multidimensionality of the battlefield and the heightening speed of battles.[58] The FDF was inspired by these trends. Finland acquired much matériel, notably from the former German Democratic Republic and the Netherlands, that allowed for greater troop mobility, which in turn also encouraged a revision of tactics.[59]

Spurred by these developments, the FDF's tactical review ultimately led to the Finnish Army Land Warfare Doctrine Reform 2015 (*Maavoimien taistelu 2015*). The reform entailed a comprehensive shift in the mindset regarding how land battle was to be conducted, including a tactical revision towards greater infantry mobility and flexibility. The doctrine essentially switched from line defence to point defence: instead of maintaining a dense defence line along the border, the idea was to retain specific strategic points in the terrain, often further to the rear, with small patrols sent out to the front and behind enemy lines to wear the attacker down. In this context, APM became more problematic to use, as they challenged the mobility of the Finnish patrols as well as that of the enemy. Another challenge with APM in the new tactical concept was that the operational depth in modern warfare was expected to be up to hundreds of kilometres, with no clear battle lines demarcated.[60] This also increased the risks associated with APM, since, with such operational depth, only limited civilian evacuation would be possible.

These considerations and concerns did not in themselves cause the abandonment of APM. However, they may have facilitated the military's transition as pressure mounted to enter the Ottawa Treaty. At the very least, they likely contributed to making APM appear less indispensable, and in some ways even challenging, for the organisation of national defence. On the other hand, some previous analyses have argued that the causal link between doctrine and choice regarding APM in fact ran in the other direction: it was the renunciation of APM that drove the doctrinal reform rather than the other way round.[61] It is conceivable that both dynamics were simultaneously present in the process.

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[58] *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*, 18.

[59] Interview 3.

[60] Kimmo Lehto, "Näkökohtia uuden taistelutavan kehitystyöstä Trombi 2013 -harjoituksen pohjalta" [Aspects of the development work for the new doctrine based on the Trombi 2013 exercise], in *Maavoimien taistelu 2015 sosiologisesta näkökulmasta: Suomen Sotilassosiologinen Seura 20 vuotta*, ed. Risto Sinkko (Tampere: Juvenes Print, 2015), 61–62.

[61] Ville Majamaa, *A Small Sacrifice for Security: Why Finland Gave Up Its Landmines* (London: British American Security Information Council, 2017), 16; de Fresnes and Rimpiläinen, "Puolustusvoimien komentaja."

No (public) formal review of infantry tactics has been carried out in Finland since Russia's war on Ukraine, but some analysts suggest that observations from Ukraine have precipitated new tactical appraisals. Notably, as the Russian military has shown a complete lack of scruples in their treatment of Ukrainian civilians in contexts such as the Bucha massacre, ideas of great operational depth and trading space for time seem to present greater risks than previously anticipated. Finnish policymakers may thus have grown wearier of the possibility of a Russian occupation of even parts of the country and even for a limited time.[62] Also Finland's NATO membership and the Alliance's commitment to defend "every inch" of Allied territory may influence Finnish thinking around force posture options. Infantry tactics may therefore once again be shifting towards forward positioning. Within such new frameworks, APM are once again increasing in usefulness and value.

4.2 Expiring replacement technologies and economic stagnation

The second underlying military development in the fall and rise of the APM relates to Finnish military capabilities and weak national finances. As described above, post-Cold War expectations regarding the future of warfare heavily focused on advanced technology, and acquisitions made in that period responded to such needs. However, as this matériel is reaching the end of its lifespan, not only have the forecasts of future warfare changed; the Finnish economy has also significantly deteriorated. This has likely reinforced the attractiveness of the APM in Finland.

During the process of entering the Ottawa Treaty, Finland sought to replace the capabilities that would be lost with the APM. It was estimated that substitution was possible, albeit expensive, save for the irreplaceable psychological effects.[63] At the same time, the Finnish APM in stock were about to expire and had to be replaced one way or another. Proponents of the APM ban highlighted that, under the circumstances, new replacement technologies were a responsible choice, as they would both replace most APM capabilities and update and improve them.[64]

In total, the FDF was allocated some €200 million worth of additional funding to invest in replacement capabilities.[65] These included, notably, upgraded AVM fitted with modern sensors and anti-handling devices, improved command-detonated directional fragmentation mines, night vision capabilities, fire control

[62] Interview 2, 3; Häggblom, "Landminornas återkomst."

[63] "Hallituksen esitys 56/2025 vp"; *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*.

[64] *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*, 24.

[65] "Hallituksen esitys 56/2025 vp".

capabilities, target acquisition devices, and unmanned aerial vehicles.[66] Another EUR 100 million was reassigned from the ordinary defence budget for the purchase of heavy rocket launchers. Together, the new capabilities were estimated to sufficiently make up for the functions of the APM. Many of the technologies represented the cutting edge of their time, and, as noted before, the FDF ultimately reported satisfaction with the new, arguably superior, capabilities secured relative to the ones lost with the APM. All in all, the replacement technologies were considered useful, effective, and in phase with the assumptions of modern warfare at the time of acquisition.[67] In this sense, although obligations of loyalty to the political line undoubtedly determined the FDF's public approval of the APM decision, military representatives also may have genuinely found that Finland's defence had ultimately reached a position of relative gains.[68]

However, some experts have since been more critical of the superiority of the new capabilities. According to this view, much of the same matériel eventually would have been acquired in any case, and the allocation of extra funds merely speeded up the process.[69] In the longer term, the replacement technologies may therefore not have been as singular as they may have appeared. Some replacements may even have turned out to be disappointing. Notably, high hopes were placed on the so-called jump charge, developed by Finnish arms producers under the guidance of the MoD.[70] The jump charge was believed to cover many of the functions of the APM: it was a simple device, domestically produced, obstructing and causing casualties to the attacker, and inducing terror much like APM, while complying with Ottawa requirements by being command-detonated.[71] As the project advanced, however, technical challenges changed the profile of the

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[66] Häggblom, "Landminornas återkomst"; Sofia Kajander, "Behöver Finland personminor vid östgränsen igen? Vi frågade experter" [Does Finland need anti-personnel mines at the eastern border again? We asked experts], *Yle*, January 3, 2025, https://yle.fi/a/7-10069655.

[67] Interview 2, 3, 6.

[68] MTV Uutiset-STT, "Puolustusvoimat ei kaipaa kansan haikailemia jalkaväkimiinoja takaisin: "Kun miettii kaikkia niitä välineitä, mitä saimme tilalle. . ." [The Defence Forces does not miss anti-personnel mines yearned by the people: "When you think about all the equipment we got instead. . ."], *MTV Uutiset*, March 3, 2022, https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/puolustusvoimat-ei-kaipaa-kansan-haikailemia-jalkavakimiinoja-takaisin-kun-miettii-kaikkia-niita-valineita-mita-saimme-tilalle/8372694.

[69] Interview 6.

[70] Interview 4.

[71] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Puolustusvoimat esitteli kansainvälistä huomiota saaneen 'erittäin viheliäisen' hyppypanoksen, näin se toimii" [The Defence Forces presented the "extremely vile" jump charge garnering international attention, this is how it works], *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 28, 2019, https://www.hs.fi/suomi/art-2000006051195.html; Antti Parviala, "Suomi kehitti uuden aseen kiisteltyjen miinojen tilalle—Miten hyppypanos toimii, onko se kansainvälisten sopimusten mukainen?" [Finland developed a new weapon instead of the prohibited mines—How does the jump charge work, is it in line with international treaties?] *Yle*, March 28, 2019. https://yle.fi/a/3-10711363.

weapon and reduced its resemblance to the APM.[72] Ultimately, after at least 15 years of development, in 2026 it was announced that the jump charge had not been completed and the FDF had not placed orders for it. By some estimates, the weapon had been overtaken by time, as drones were being used in a similar but more efficient manner in Ukraine.[73]

The jump charge was not among the originally identified replacement technologies, and the failure of the hopes placed in it was not decisive for the reintroduction of APM. However, the case demonstrates how the FDF may have been preparing for a kind of war and investing in capabilities that no longer seemed pertinent post-2022. Some of the replacement technologies were primarily intended for a different kind of warfare than that exemplified by the war in Ukraine. In Ukraine-type warfare, the aspects of APM once deemed irreplaceable again gained in prominence and perceived value. These include self-detonation, long-term area denial, the holistic slowdown of the adversary's movement and actions, and perhaps most importantly, the psychological effect of fear and uncertainty.[74]

As of 2026, some of the replacement matériel acquired in the 2010s has already reached the end of its lifecycle. At best, some of the equipment will last until the mid-2030s.[75] Replacement of the equipment thus draws closer, providing an opening for the reintroduction of APM. At the same time, Finnish state finances keep deteriorating. Finland has experienced no economic growth in real terms since 2008, and as of spring 2026, eight out of nine parties in Parliament have concurred that heavy budget-balancing measures will be required in the coming years.[76] Although defence is under present circumstances the one sector not facing austerity, the cheap APM undoubtedly appears an attractive option in

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[72] Heikki Lukinmaa, "Uutissuomalainen: Jalkaväkimiinalle ei löydy selvää korvaajaa" [Uutissuomalainen: No obvious substitute can be found for the anti-personnel mine], *Yle*, December 2, 2024, https://yle.fi/a/74-20128509.

[73] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Suomalainen asekeksintö ei kelvannut Puolustusvoimille" [The Finnish weapon innovation was not good enough for the Defence Forces], *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 1, 2026, https://www.hs.fi/suomi/art-2000011783013.html.

[74] "Hallituksen esitys 56/2025 vp"; Häggblom, "Landminornas återkomst"; Iida Hallikainen, "Häkkänen: Ottawan sopimuksesta irtaantuminen on täysin mahdollista—torppaa "pöyristyttävät" väitteet miinoista" [Häkkänen: Withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty completely possible—Rejects "outrageous" claims about mines] *Ilta-Sanomat*, December 14, 2024, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000010899602.html; see also Suomenmaa-STT. "Puolustusministeri kiistää, että jalkaväkimiinojen suorituskyky olisi ehditty korvata Suomessa" [Defence minister denies that anti-personnel mine capabilities would have been replaced in Finland], *Suomenmaa*, April 4, 2025. https://www.suomenmaa.fi/uutiset/puolustusministeri-kiistaa-etta-jalkavakimiinojen-suorituskyky-olisi-ehditty-korvata-suomessa/.

[75] Interview 6.

[76] Petri Raivio and Hannu Tikkala, "Puolueet sopivat miljardiluokan sopeutustavoitteista ensi vaalikaudelle—vasemmistoliitto jäi ulos" [Parties agreed on billions worth of austerity targets for next electoral mandate—Left Alliance stayed out] *Yle*, February 25, 2026, https://yle.fi/a/74-20212104.

comparison with expensive and potentially insufficient alternatives vis-à-vis current expectations of warfare.[77] In summary, as the cutting-edge equipment intended for the warfare of the 2010s expires, the forthcoming matériel renewal was likely seen as an opportunity to reintroduce APM into the arsenal, and as a justification for doing so, thereby offering the double benefit of improved defence capability without correspondingly increasing costs.[78]

4.3 Shifting expectations of Russian strategy and tactics

The third and likely the most important military development underpinning the reintroduction of APM concerns expectations of Russia's military strategy and tactics. Estimates of Russia's behaviour have been the key factor in Finnish operational planning throughout modern times. Presently, the political and military establishment is taking close note of the developments in Russia's war against Ukraine. These lessons relate to both the strategic and tactical levels: to Russia's willingness to conduct large-scale war and accept casualties, as well as its modes of using infantry. In various ways, the observations speak in favour of bringing back APM.

As Finland considered accession to the Ottawa Treaty in the 1990s and 2000s, estimates of likely scenarios of Russian aggression were in flux. Traditional assessments had primarily foreseen a massive conventional invasion of Finland, yet post-Cold War scenarios of direct Russian military aggression also included a surprise attack by mechanised units against key strategic targets. The shifting estimates were based on several developments in and observations of warfare globally and of Russia in particular. On the one hand, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the generally weakened state of Russia made large-scale invasions appear less likely. On the other hand, the character of war seemed to be shifting towards shorter duration and loss minimisation.[79] In this regard, during the Cold War,

[77] By NATO's estimates, the production costs of one APM range from $3 to $75. NATO, "Clearing the Path: Innovating Solutions for a Landmine-Free Future," Allied Command Transformation, March 25, 2024, https://www.act.nato.int/article/innovation-solutions-landmine-free-future/. At the same time, arms producers highlight that modern APM are significantly more expensive than those that Finland gave up in the 2010s; see Raimo Helasmäki, "Nammo Lapua oy:n lausunto hallituksen esityksestä jalkaväkimiinojen käytön, varastoinnin, tuotannon ja siirron kieltämisestä ja niiden hävittämisestä tehdyn yleissopimuksen (Ottawan sopimus) irtisanomiseksi ja siihen liittyviksi laeksi (HE 56/2025 vp)" [Nammo Lapua's statement regarding the government proposal to leave the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Treaty) and related laws], June 9, 2025.

[78] "Hallituksen esitys 56/2025 vp." For further research on the influence of cost estimates on arms restrictions, see Rodrigo Fracalossi de Moraes, "Anti-Weapons Activism and Arms Bans: Why Brazil Banned Anti-Personnel Mines but Not Cluster Munitions," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 21, no. 3 (2025): oraf019.

[79] *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*, 17.

Russia had already started showing signs of predilection for quick and limited strategic strikes. It conducted or attempted to conduct such swift government-toppling operations in Prague in 1968 and Kabul in 1979, and it also invested significantly in rapid elite forces such as paratroopers. The Russian appetite for extended large-scale wars thus seemed diminished. These estimates had a bearing on the perceived utility of the APM. In the strategic strike scenarios, APM would have been of relatively limited use. For instance, in a targeted Russian surprise attack on Helsinki, there would not have been enough time to plan and lay mines to hinder the attacker.[80] The relative prioritisation of strategic strike scenarios contributed to a relative devaluation of the APM and facilitated the signing of the Ottawa Treaty.

However, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine reaffirmed the relevance of conventional warfare in its toolkit. On a strategic level, this revalued the APM as a weapon of defence in two ways. First, it indicated Russia's generally heightened risk-taking and its high willingness to accept casualties. This inflated estimates of the risks and casualties that would be needed to deter Russia, and APM were regarded as an important and useful capability to add to such deterrence and defence.[81] Second, the war shifted expectations of conflict duration and mode. Whereas strategic strike scenarios foresaw short and intense conflicts relying heavily on airpower, the war in Ukraine showed that protracted, large-scale, and land-based war was again a real possibility. A Russian strategic strike could be stalled and be transformed into a prolonged conflict. Finland therefore started planning for prolonged and attritional warfare, in which the advantages of the APM arguably increase.[82] As resources wear thin and losses on both sides are replaced with less experienced soldiers, the low cost, simplicity, and ease of use of the APM are important assets of a defensive weapon.

On the tactical level, Russia traditionally relied on mechanised units with main battle tanks at the front and armoured infantry transports following behind. The infantry would dismount from their vehicles for attack only after tanks had cleared the way. Such swift and mobile tactics were still witnessed in the early stages of the war in Ukraine. However, after Russia's original plans failed and the first attack stalled, Russian infantry have increasingly advanced on foot without

[80] Interview 3.

[81] Elina Kervinen, "Tutkijan mukaan Suomi saisi ymmärrystä jalkaväkimiinojen palauttamisesta: 'Pitää olla valmiuksia aiheuttaa suurempia tappioita"' [According to this researcher, Finland would get sympathy for reintroducing anti-personnel mines: 'Must have readiness to cause greater casualties'], *Helsingin Sanomat*, November 25, 2024, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000010856697.html

[82] Waris, Olli. "'Erotaan hallitusti'—Jukka Kopra toivoo Suomen seuraavan Puolan ja Baltian maiden esimerkkiä" ["Withdraw in a controlled manner"—Jukka Kopra hopes Finland will follow the Polish and Baltic example], *Ilta-Sanomat*, March 18, 2025. https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000011105974.html.

protection, often in long, dispersed infantry chains.[83] This reversion to "old-fashioned" infantry tactics is largely due to the development and use of new technology. The relevant technologies include drones, advanced sensors, and other electronic warfare, and long-range weapons such as artillery and multiple launch rocket systems.[84] With mechanised units thus rendered more vulnerable, the cheaper and less conspicuous infantry troops have grown relatively more useful.

The static and attritional character of the war, with the extensive no-man's-land "kill zones," has since 2024 increasingly inspired further types of infantry-reliant tactics. Especially initially, these included massive human wave attacks (also called "the meat grinder"), where Russian infantry charged relentlessly and regardless of casualties to wear down Ukraine's defences through attrition.[85] More recently, the tactics seem to have shifted towards infiltration offensives by ever smaller infantry units, previously comprising perhaps ten soldiers but more recently as few as two or three.[86] Moving on foot or using light motorised vehicles such as motorcycles, these units seek to break through the porous Ukrainian lines. The tactic stretches Ukraine's defences thinner and, when successful, provides Russia with psychological and propaganda victories.[87] In these kinds of contexts, APM can potentially constitute an effective deterrent and impediment. It can cause significant casualties and slow down advances by dismounted infantry, as the speed-based Russian tactics do not accommodate mine clearing, which is often a manual task requiring cooperation and coordination between, typically, infantry, tanks, combat engineers, artillery, electronic warfare, logistics, and air support.[88] Minefields, along

[83] Elina Karjalainen, "Lindberg A-studiossa: Sodankäynnissä tapahtunut oleellinen muutos—se puoltaa jalkaväkimiinojen käyttöönottoa" [Lindberg in A-studio: A substantial change in warfare—advocates introducing anti-personnel mines], *Ilta-Sanomat*, November 26, 2024, https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000010861180.html.

[84] Jarmo Huhtanen, "Keskitien kenraali" [A middle course general], *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 23, 2025, https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000011026769.html.

[85] Olga Ivshina, Becky Dale, and Kirstie Brewer, "Russia's meat grinder soldiers—50,000 confirmed dead," *BBC Russian*, April 17, 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-68819853.

[86] Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds, "Tactical Developments During the Third Year of the Russo–Ukrainian War," Royal United Services Institute, February 2025, https://static.rusi.org/tactical-developments-third-year-russo-ukrainian-war-february-2205.pdf; Jari Alenius, "Asiantuntija: Jalkaväkimiinoista Ukrainalle ehkä enemmän apua kuin ohjuksista" [Expert: Anti-personnel mines potentially more useful to Ukraine than missiles], *Ilta-Sanomat*, November 20, 2024, https://www.is.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000010847242.html; David French, "'Time Is Not on Russia's Side,'" *New York Times*, February 26, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/26/opinion/russia-ukraine-drone-war.html.

[87] Sébastian Seibt, "How Russia's 'thousand cuts' tactic is straining Ukraine's frontline forces," *France24*, February 24, 2026, https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20260224-how-russia-thousand-cuts-tactic-is-straining-ukraine-frontline-forces.

[88] Mick Ryan, "Russia Is Expanding Its Use of Landmines in Ukraine but Removing Them Is Proving Difficult," *ABC News*, August 14, 2023, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-15/russia-ukraine-land-mine-minefield-clearance-military-strategy/102725634.

with various types of anti-tank obstacles, constitute the basis of the crucial Ukrainian "fortress belt" defensive line in the Donbas region.[89]

In addition, Russia's strategy in the occupied territories of Ukraine has involved massive use of APM, by some estimates hundreds of thousands of them.[90] This has hindered Ukrainian efforts to reclaim captured territory, causing casualties, hampering counteroffensives, and damaging equipment.[91] The vast minefields have impeded Ukrainian manoeuvre warfare, which relies on movement, initiative, and surprise, forcing Ukraine to fall back on attritional approaches instead, in which the numerically stronger Russia has the upper hand.[92] A common argument in support of the reintroduction of APM in Finland has therefore been that Russia never signed the Ottawa Treaty and uses APM indiscriminately in Ukraine.[93] However, it is important to note that the APM are not a symmetrically essential capability of modern warfare in the way that, for instance, artillery is. The possession and use of APM by one party to a conflict do not automatically cause an asymmetry that puts the other party at a significant disadvantage. In this sense, the argument for acquiring and using APM because the adversary also does so is somewhat weak. However, to laymen, including non-expert policymakers, the APM asymmetry between Finland and Russia may appear to be of military importance. Furthermore, the asymmetry presumably speaks to the Finnish public's sense of justice, which policymakers may believe is psychologically important for national morale and trust in national capability, and thereby for defence capability.[94]

[89] Rod Thornton and Marina Miron, "European Countries Are Now Turning to Landmines to Create New Deadly Defensive Barriers from Russia," *The Conversation*, October 3, 2025, https://theconversation.com/european-countries-are-now-turning-to-landmines-to-create-new-deadly-defensive-barriers-from-russia-266181; Yevhenia Martyniuk, "So you think Ukraine can just leave Donbas? It's the shield forged in steel—and paid in blood," *Euromaidan Press*, August 14, 2025, https://euromaidanpress.com/2025/08/14/ukraine-donbas-fortress-belt-defense-russia/.

[90] Ryan, "Russia Is Expanding."

[91] NATO, "Clearing the Path."

[92] The attritional character of the war in Ukraine on the whole is due not only to mines, but also, notably, drones and means of electronic warfare. Thornton and Miron, "European Countries."

[93] "Hallituksen esitys 56/2025 vp," 19.

[94] In the early 2000s, giving up the APM was feared to weaken faith in the country's defence capability and thus to weaken the general willingness to defend the country. *Puolustusministeriön jalkaväkimiinaselvitystyöryhmän väliraportti*, 24.

5 Outlook and implications of the APM reintroduction for NATO

This chapter takes a broader and more forward-looking perspective on the APM. It describes how Finland will proceed with the APM acquisition process and how it plans to use the weapon system. Then, it puts this into a comparative perspective with the Baltic states and Poland, before reflecting on the implications of the APM reintroduction for NATO and allied states.

5.1 The APM acquisition process

The acquisition of APM in Finland was initiated immediately after the formal exit from the Ottawa Treaty in January 2026, under the direction of the FDF. Estimates from before the process was begun suggest that, barring significant delays, the entire procedure from legal disengagement through acquisition, production, training, and deployment could be achieved in less than two years. The training of troops will start once sufficient stocks have been accumulated, likely in late 2026.[95] Full operational capability may be expected by the end of 2027.[96] The most challenging part of the process will be meeting the strictly regulated testing and qualification requirements, given the evolution of detonation technology.[97]

Initially, the FDF will adapt its existing directional fragmentation mines, replacing the current command-detonation system with a tripwire system. New acquisitions will then likely focus on the two types of APM that the FDF used before Finland joined the Ottawa Treaty. The first acquisitions will be fragmentation mines working on a tripwire principle and placed out in the terrain manually. Such fragmentation mines are particularly well adapted to Finnish forest terrain, as they can be well hidden on tree trunks. These will be followed by step-on blast mines, which may be somewhat updated from their earlier guise, with a focus on a cheap

[95] Elina Ranta, "Mistä jalkaväkimiinat Suomelle? Nämä yhtiöt ovat vaihtoehtoja" [From where anti-personnel mines for Finland? These companies are options], *Taloussanomat*, June 29, 2025, https://www.is.fi/taloussanomat/art-2000011324467.html.

[96] Boothby, "Finland, Territorial Security"; Jouko Juonala, "Puolustusvoimat on valmis ottamaan jalkaväkimiinat käyttöön heti Ottawan sopimuksen umpeuduttua" [The Defence Forces are ready to take up anti-personnel mines as soon as the Ottawa Treaty expires], *Ilta-Sanomat*, August 26, 2025, https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000011452773.html; Marcus Lillkvist, "Beväringar i Dragsvik ska börja öva med de förbjudna minorna igen: 'Kan spränga sönder en fot'" [Recruits in Dragsvik will start exercising with the prohibited mines again: 'Can blow a foot apart'], *Yle*, September 16, 2025, https://yle.fi/a/7-10077162; Ranta, "Mistä jalkaväkimiinat Suomelle?".

[97] EDK-2025-AK-29133.

and robust build.[98] Prior to Finland joining the Ottawa Treaty, Finnish APM stocks totalled more than one million APM, including 816,180 blast mines and 228,145 fragmentation mines. Based on this, the final size of the replenished stocks will likely amount to at least tens of thousands; most likely, the aim will be to reach a figure similar to the pre-Ottawa total.[99] In a final step, advanced blast mines, fitted with sensors, remote controls, and self-neutralisation capabilities, and capable of aerial or other remote delivery, will be acquired.[100] Such "smart mines" have been particularly highlighted in the political discourse surrounding the reintroduction decision. However, the low cost, production capacity, and ease of use of more traditional types suggest that they will constitute the bulk of the APM acquired.

Beyond the FDF adapting existing directional fragmentation mines, acquisitions on a larger scale will need to come from commercial arms manufacturers, and contracts will likely be put out to tender.[101] There is an outspoken preference for domestic producers, both in the interest of security of supply and because few friendly producers exist worldwide.[102] When the APM debate began, the Finnish arms industry displayed significant hesitation. Given the broad acceptance of the Ottawa Treaty globally, APM production was feared to cause reputational damage abroad, and its profitability was deemed uncertain. Potential markets were foreseen mainly in the Baltic countries and the United States, perhaps for use by American troops based in Europe.[103] Political leaders have also been cautious about the APM as an export product.[104] Several Finnish companies have since

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[98] Häggblom, "Landminornas återkomst"; Joonas Immonen, "Puolustusvoimat: Näin suuri muutos jalkaväkimiinojen palauttaminen olisi" [Defence Forces: Reintroducing anti-personnel mines would be this big of a change], *Ilta-Sanomat*, April 4, 2025, https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000011143789.html."

[99] Ranta, "Mistä jalkaväkimiinat Suomelle?"; Kristian Saine, "Kun jalkaväkimiinat kiellettiin, Suomella oli niitä 1 044 325—Jarmo Lindberg arvioi, mitä Ottawan sopimuksesta irtautuminen merkitsisi" [When anti-personnel mines were prohibited, Finland had 1,044,325 of them—Jarmo Lindberg estimates what withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty would mean], *Ilta-Sanomat*, March 12, 2025, https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000011087273.html.

[100] Lillkvist, "Beväringar i Dragsvik."

[101] Jouko Juonala, "Kommentti: Jalkaväkimiina on ilkeä ase—niiden tekeminen voi tuoda Suomen puolustusteollisuudelle mainehaittaa" [Comment: The anti-personnel mine is a vile weapon—Producing them could cause reputational damage to Finnish defence industry], *Ilta-Sanomat*, April 1, 2025, https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000011138604.html.

[102] STT and Ayla Albayrak, "Asiantuntijat: Jalkaväkimiinojen valmistaminen onnistuisi Suomessa" [Experts: Producing anti-personnel mines would work in Finland], *Ilta-Sanomat*, April 2, 2025, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000011142141.html.

[103] Sofia Kajander and Carmela Walder, "Finland förbereder inhemsk produktion av personminor—företagen tiger om sina planer" [Finland prepares domestic production of anti-personnel mines—Companies silent about their plans], *Yle*, June 28, 2025, https://yle.fi/a/7-10080426.

[104] Otto Rantanen, "Pitäisikö Suomen valmistaa muiden maiden miinat? Haavisto ja Kaikkonen eri linjoilla" [Should Finland produce other countries' mines? Haavisto and Kaikkonen disagree], *Ilta-Sanomat*, June 25, 2025, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000011323172.html.

reported interest in the business. These include Nammo Lapua, Insta, and Raikka, while Forcit Explosives has announced that it is open to discussing the matter.[105]

Although Finnish policymakers recognise that development and acquisition cooperation among the countries that left the Ottawa Treaty would be "natural," reportedly, no concrete cooperation or joint acquisitions were planned as of the first half of 2026.[106] Besides Finland, Poland and Lithuania have announced or been speculated to prefer domestic production of APM. Poland has been more explicit about its domestic production plans, and Polish arms producers have been both keener to produce APM and more open about their readiness to do so that their Finnish counterparts. For example, Polska Grupa Militarna S.A. announced its decision to expand its capacity for large-scale APM production as early as July 2025.[107] Equally, the state-owned defence company Belma reported in December 2025 that it was preparing for a government order of a total of 5–6 million mines "of all types," increasing the annual production from 100,000 to up to 1.2 million.[108] Lithuania has announced that it will rely on domestic production, while both Finland and Lithuania are considering delivering APM to Ukraine.[109]

5.2 Implications for NATO allies

For NATO, the decision by Finland, Poland, and the Baltics to withdraw from the Ottawa Treaty has few formal implications. The Alliance does not prohibit the use of APM by its member states, nor did it need to approve the decision. Within NATO Headquarters, the issue has reportedly been addressed only in three contexts: first, at the political level in the North Atlantic Council; second, in a brief announcement made by the five withdrawing countries to the Arms Control, Disarmament, and Non-Proliferation Committee; and third, by the Office of Legal Affairs, where NATO's legal experts assess the matter from a legal perspective.[110] Overall, NATO has sought to avoid politicising the question and has refrained from taking a position on the matter. The Secretariat is not coordinating member state positions, nor is it likely to have the legal authority to

[105] Emmi Julkunen, "Reuters: Suomi ja Liettua aikovat tuottaa jalkaväkimiinoja Ukrainan käyttöön" [Reuters: Finland and Lithuania intend to produce anti-personnel mine for Ukraine to use], *Ilta-Sanomat*, July 9, 2025, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000011355555.html.

[106] Interview 5; Puolustusvaliokunta, "Valiokunnan lausunto PuVL 4/2025 vp─ HE 56/2025 vp," 2025, 6.

[107] Damian Ratka, "Polish Industry Resumes Production of Anti Personnel Mines," *Defence24.com*, July 4, 2025, https://defence24.com/industry/polish-industry-resumes-production-of-anti-personnel-mines.

[108] Reuters, "Poland to Start."

[109] Julkunen, "Reuters: Suomi ja Liettua."

[110] Interview 9.

do so. Other allied states have similarly remained politically cautious about expressing regret over the five countries' policy choice.

At the same time, until the five countries' withdrawal, the United States was the only NATO member state outside the Ottawa Treaty. The withdrawal will therefore inevitably have practical consequences for the Alliance and its members. At the military level, the APM matter is presumably being examined within Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) to assess the implications for NATO's regional defence plans.[111]

At lower levels of planning, the problem is more acute. As the plans are classified, little further information on the process is available. However, it is likely that NATO will be required to adapt to ensure allied interoperability in the future. Although this task is facilitated by, for instance, double-hatted staff responsible for planning in member states and within NATO, it is tremendous. In wartime, operating in the same area while accounting for different national restrictions on the use of weapons systems would be complicated and time-consuming. If the APM decision thus brings about strategic revisions within NATO, it would constitute a rare case of bottom-up development of NATO strategy, whereby individual and, indeed, small member states force the Alliance to adapt its planning.

Compared especially with the Baltic states, Finland has certain advantages in using APM. The country has greater strategic depth, and its forests and waterways make its terrain less penetrable. Consequently, the way the countries use APM will likely differ. In Finland, few areas are estimated to require fortifications, mines, and other man-made obstacles across long stretches. This is in clear contrast with the other four countries, where the Baltic Defence Line and the Polish East Shield are currently being constructed.[112] Especially the Suwalki Gap is expected to be a focus of APM emplacement, although Polish representatives have also hinted that the entire length of the borders with Russia and Belarus may be mined in a crisis.[113]

The other four countries also seem to differ from Finland in how they stress the importance of APM. Finnish representatives highlight that APM constitute one counter-mobility measure among many and that it is relevant primarily when used together with other weapons systems and obstacles. In both political debate and expert statements, its use is generally described in restrictive and undramatic

[111] Interview 9.

[112] Interview 6.

[113] Associated Press, "Poland formally withdraws from Ottawa Convention on landmines, citing Russian threat," *CBC*, February 20, 2026, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/poland-ottawa-convention-landmines-9.7098794; GlobalData, "How might NATO Allies procure land mines?" *Army Technology*, June 30, 2025, https://www.army-technology.com/analyst-comment/how-might-nato-allies-procure-land-mines/?cf-view; Michael N. Schmitt, "Cluster Munitions and Anti-Personnel Land Mines: An Explainer," *Articles of War*, Lieber Institute, West Point, March 28, 2025, https://lieber.westpoint.edu/cluster-munitions-anti-personnel-land-mines-explainer/.

terms. In contrast, Estonian representatives, for instance, have stated that withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty "will significantly expand the possibilities to defend Estonia's security," while Polish representatives have characterised the APM as "one of the most important elements of the defence structure we are constructing on the eastern flank of NATO."[114] However, these differences may be more a matter of political style than of military substance. It remains unclear to what extent they indicate real conviction and military positioning, as opposed to signalling strength and determination to domestic audiences.

Like Finland, the Baltic states and Poland do not plan to mine their borders or other areas permanently, but rather to lay mines only in the event of a crisis or conflict. Nonetheless, here too, the Baltic and Polish position has at least rhetorically differed somewhat from the Finnish one. Notably, Poland has affirmed that, if a threat emerges, it will be able to mine its eastern border within 48 hours.[115] APM will in effect constitute part of the East Shield fortifications and, similarly, part of the Baltic Defence Line.[116] Whether the weapon's planned use is limited primarily to the fortifications or whether it also features in the four countries' infantry tactics more broadly is unclear. In all four countries, the plans have been significantly influenced by the US military and have likely been coordinated with them. In Finland, this influence has likely been much more limited, at least so far, and no new fortifications are envisaged.

In the short term, the brunt of the military challenges that the reintroduction of APM entails is borne by affected allies, and the matter is dealt with bilaterally between them and the five states withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty. Given that more than 20 countries have forces present in across the five eastern flank allies under the FLF framework, the problem will potentially concern many NATO members.[117] Each will need to consider their position on the APM question, as their use by the FLF host nations may entail legal challenges and problems of interoperability. The extent of the dilemma for each nation depends on their national interpretation and implementation of the Ottawa Treaty. During Finland's

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[114] Associated Press, "Poland pulls out of treaty banning antipersonnel mines, says it will use them to defend against Russia," *NBC News*, February 20, 2026, https://www.nbcnews.com/world/europe/poland-treaty-antipersonnel-mines-russia-ottawa-convention-ukraine-war-rcna259868; ERR, "President approves Estonia's withdrawal from anti-personnel landmine convention," *ERR*, June 13, 2025, https://news.err.ee/1609721424/president-approves-estonia-s-withdrawal-from-anti-personnel-landmine-convention.

[115] Reuters, "Poland Able to Mine Eastern Border within 48 Hours, Says PM," *TVP World*, February 19, 2026, https://tvpworld.com/91672830/tusk-poland-able-to-mine-eastern-border-within-48-hours-after-ottawa-convention-exit.

[116] Reuters, "Poland to Start Anti-personnel Mines Production to Secure Eastern Border," *TVP World*, December 18, 2025, https://tvpworld.com/90611950/poland-reinforce-eastern-border-with-domestically-made-anti-personnel-mines.

[117] Jakob Gustafsson and Eva Hagström Frisell, *A New Generation of Forward Defence: NATO in the Baltic States*, FOI-R--5765--SE (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency—FOI, 2025).

preparations for withdrawal, coordination with allied countries was emphasised.[118] However, potential interoperability challenges were not further discussed.

Sweden is among the countries for which the issue is especially troublesome. On the one hand, as a new member state, it previously had neither the need nor the opportunity to consider the matter. On the other, the Swedish reading of the Ottawa Treaty is particularly strict, with criminal liability extending down through the military to the level of the individual soldier. Chief of Defence Michael Claesson has highlighted this difficulty, warning that under current obligations, questions of legality could arise if the SAF were to cooperate with Finnish or Baltic troops in those countries.[119] Its implications are especially broad for Sweden's engagement in Finland, given that the extent of Finnish-Swedish cooperation is on a larger scale and takes place within both a bilateral and a NATO framework. In essence, however, the same issue arises in Sweden's engagement in FLF Latvia.

After the Finnish decision, the SAF produced guidelines, based on national legislation and verified by legal experts, to manage the situation. Such rules of engagement aim to provide a legally clear and safe framework that will help navigate the situation and ensure that individual Swedish soldiers will not be caught up in the resulting judicial puzzle. Although the Finnish policy process highlighted coordination with allies, the Swedish rules were reportedly formulated without coordination or dialogue with Finland; Swedish representatives emphasise that it was for Finland to make the decision and for Sweden simply to adapt to it.[120] Under the current regulations, Sweden cannot participate in the planning of activities in which APM will be used, nor operate in sectors where APM are to be laid. At the command level, where blocking and area denial are discussed at a high enough level of abstraction, the problem is typically manageable. On the ground, however, the situation is more difficult. Consequently, within the FLF framework, for example, the operational sectors of FLF troops and those of Finnish troops must be geographically separated. In addition to restrictions on emplacing APM, interoperability considerations include Sweden's ability to transport APM and its potential inability to deploy in areas where APM are used.[121]

The problems of interoperability are relatively limited in peacetime. The presence of allied troops in Finland is limited, and in Finnish military strategy, APM are not emplaced pre-emptively; mines are stored and brought into use only in the event of a crisis or conflict. In principle, the matter of interoperability might be

[118] HE 56/2025, 20; PuVL 4/2025, 5.

[119] Interview 8.

[120] Interview 7, 8.

[121] Interview 8.

more urgent in Lithuania, given the permanent presence of the FLF in the country. However, the problem does not appear insurmountable; varying treaty commitments are usually a manageable feature of international military cooperation.[122] Nevertheless, in wartime, the operational restrictions might entail complications, as planning time is scarce and decisions must be made urgently. Information would need to be continuously shared with allies regarding where and how APM have been used, as the five countries' plans for using APM are fluid. As parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, under which APM may not be left out in the terrain for extensive periods of time, the countries are legally bound to map and remove APM they emplace.[123]

The SAF's present rules of engagement will likely remain an interim solution, as the Swedish Government and the SAF are currently conducting further analysis of how to adapt. In principle, three solutions are possible. First, Sweden might retain its long-standing interpretation of the Ottawa Treaty, but this option seems unlikely given the depth of Finnish–Swedish defence cooperation, the present interoperability challenges, and the general security environment. Instead, the choice is likely between a revision of policy and legal interpretations to provide far greater flexibility on the one hand, and withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty on the other. Given the resistance to the latter by both the Social Democratic Party and the Moderate Party thus far, the former option presently appears more probable, although also legally more complicated. A decision on the matter can only be expected once the September 2026 general election has taken place and the new government has taken office. As with the SAF's rules of engagement, any potential revision of the Swedish posture is expected to be unilateral and without coordination with Finland or other countries reintroducing APM.[124]

Besides Sweden, public debate on the future of the APM has also surfaced in other NATO member states, including, at a minimum, Canada and the United Kingdom.[125] However, despite debates at the national level, the matter is reportedly not being discussed in diplomatic circles.[126] At present, it seems unlikely that further NATO allies would seriously envisage withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty.

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[122] Grete Herlofson, Anders Ladekarl, Ulrika Modéer, and Eero Rämö, "Why Nordic governments must uphold the global ban on anti-personnel mines," *Humanitarian Law & Policy*, April 2, 2026, https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2026/04/02/why-nordic-governments-must-uphold-the-global-ban-on-anti-personnel-mines/.

[123] Juonala, "Puolustusvoimat on valmis."

[124] Interview 7, 8.

[125] Schmitt, "Cluster Munitions."

[126] Interview 9.

This, too, is a consideration for a single allied state weighing its future APM options: while leaving the Ottawa Treaty would facilitate interoperability with the countries that have withdrawn, it would also complicate cooperation with most allies in Europe.

6 Conclusion

This final chapter summarises the analysis presented in this report. It furthermore presents and discusses two key findings concerning Finnish security policy-making, on the one hand, and lessons drawn from the war in Ukraine, on the other. Throughout, it also seeks to highlight potential avenues for future research.

6.1 Summary of findings

The analysis presented in this report has shown that the Finnish decision to leave the Ottawa Treaty and reintroduce the anti-personnel landmine resulted from converging political and military developments. The heightened threat level since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine laid the groundwork for the decision by alerting policymakers and the public alike. Subsequently, the Biden administration's breaking of the APM taboo and the Trump administration's apparent disregard for international law made the reintroduction of the APM normatively possible internationally. At the same time, favourable domestic political conditions—three likeminded parties in government, and enabling individuals including a committed defence minister and a sufficiently outspoken chief of defence—were required to move the initiative forward. Finally, observations of Russia's behaviour in its war against Ukraine made the APM appear to be an increasingly essential military capability. The expiry of the service life of existing equipment made the timing right, and the strained national finances provided an additional economic incentive for acquiring low-cost equipment. Similar drivers can be assumed to have partly influenced decision-making in the Baltic states and Poland, but a comparative study would be needed for a more precise analysis. More broadly, the APM case invites further research on the potential weakening of arms control norms globally.

The above summary and the preceding analysis largely explain how and why the assessment of the APM's military utility evolved over time, and how the normative arguments and risks of reputational damage simultaneously ended up being downplayed in the new security environment. Meanwhile, why the decision was taken in the winter and spring of 2024–2025, rather than at the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022 or after the parliamentary election in 2023, remains less clear. At the political level, international norms and, in 2022, the ideological leanings of the centre-left government, probably delayed decisive action until the United States set a more permissive tone. At the military level, no single event in the war seems to explain the timing; rather, Russia's extensive use of infantry gradually became more pronounced over the course of 2024. Nevertheless, this practice did not seem to feature particularly prominently in Finnish or Western analyses of the war

in Ukraine.[127] Therefore, despite the proclaimed supremacy of military judgment in this matter, it remains unclear whether the APM decision was driven more by military considerations concerning the indispensability of APM or rather by political preferences and signalling. In particular, given that Russia is not party to the Ottawa Treaty, the reintroduction addresses the Finnish public's perceptions of fairness and, thereby, national morale.

For NATO allies, the APM reintroduction in Finland and the other four countries will entail strategic adjustments. The extent of these adjustments will depend on current interpretations of the Ottawa Treaty and levels of engagement in the five countries reintroducing the APM. Sweden is particularly affected owing to its strict reading of the Ottawa Treaty, its recent accession to the Alliance, and its deep military engagement in Finland as well as in Latvia. A revision of the Swedish interpretation of the Treaty may therefore be expected after the general election in September 2026, and a deeper analysis of the Swedish legal and military adaptation would be welcome once more information becomes available. The APM reintroduction also constitutes an unusual and interesting case of bottom-up strategic revision within NATO. As such, it might be setting a standard for how NATO might handle potentially controversial and difficult choices by its member states in the future. The precedent suggests that, at least under conditions of heightened threat, such choices may simply be quietly accepted and adapted to, despite the political and military challenges they entail for the Alliance and the allies. Further research is needed on NATO interoperability among allies with different treaty obligations.

6.2 The APM decision as an indication of future Finnish security policymaking?

The domestic unanimity regarding APM, both their ban and their reintroduction, can be analysed in terms of two typical characteristics of foreign policymaking in Finland and in many other countries, especially small ones. The first is the consensus rule, whereby national unity is considered crucial for the security of a small state.[128] The second is the influence of public opinion on a few select foreign policy topics; while foreign policy is typically a field characterised by top-down

[127] Anna-Liina Kauhanen, "Miinapäätökselle oli kova poliittinen tarve" [There was a big political need for the mine decision], *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 1, 2025, https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000011138194.html.

[128] Tapio Raunio, "Finnish Foreign Policy: Pragmatic Adjustment to a Changing World Order," in *Foreign Policy Change in Europe Since 1991*, ed. Tim Haesebrouck and Jeroen K. Joly (Springer International Publishing AG, 2021), 99–125.

leadership and limited public interest, some topics engage the public imagination more than others.[129]

However, the speed at which the APM decision was taken raises questions about future Finnish security policymaking, hinting at a new type of decision-making agility in the post-2022 security environment. The APM question certainly captured the public imagination and triggered engagement, notably through the various citizens' initiatives. Consequently, policymakers across the political spectrum had electoral incentives to support the APM reintroduction. Although the issue was not an election-winning theme in itself, active opposition to it might have alienated swing voters at the centre of the political spectrum. At the same time, the APM decision represented a remarkable departure from the consensus rule. One way of reading the development is that the government is relying on continued high levels of political and public agreement on the substance of the matter despite the apparently declining procedural inclusion of the political opposition and decreasing public insight. In other words, security policymaking may be moving towards permanent securitisation or crisis mode owing to the general uneasiness and sense of urgency regarding national security.[130]

Security concerns may increasingly be used to justify departures from normal political procedures, which could create tensions, complicate Finnish security policy decision-making, and raise questions about the future of the consensus rule and policy predictability

To put the development into perspective, at the time of the decision on NATO membership in 2022, the information flow between government and Parliament was clearly more extensive. Although the decision was certainly of a different magnitude and the need to ensure broad political consensus was great, the risks associated with inclusiveness were arguably also significant. Meanwhile, the APM decision-making process was clearly more exclusive.[131] The opposition was only informed at a late stage in the process, and most of the grounds for the decision were withheld from the public as classified information, even though public support for the decision was lower than it had been in 2022. A similarly swift and secretive process was repeated in early 2026, when the government announced its intention to lift the ban on nuclear weapons on Finnish territory. The opposition was excluded from the preparations, and, despite perhaps not being wholeheartedly opposed to the decision, was outraged. The procedure was particularly note-

[129] Ole Rudolf Holsti, *Public opinion and American foreign policy* (University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[130] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).

[131] Olli Waris, "Kommentti: Miinoista käydään yhtä salamyhkäistä keskustelua kuin Natosta—lopputuloksen voi silti arvata" [Comment: The discussion about mines is as secretive as about NATO—The outcome may still be guessed], *Ilta-Sanomat*, December 2, 2024, https://www.is.fi/politiikka/art-2000010872066.html.

worthy in light of the repeated political affirmations in 2022 that NATO membership would not need to entail nuclear weapons in Finland.

Given the relatively strong public opinion in favour of the APM, criticism of the decision will likely remain limited, and attempts to reverse it futile. However, the exclusionary dynamics observed create tensions that complicate Finnish security policy decision-making and raise questions about the future of the consensus rule and policy predictability. The examples above would suggest a trend towards more executive-driven security policymaking. Time will tell whether the trend is tied to the particular domestic political circumstances, with the NCP holding an exceptional concentration of security policy positions: the offices of President[132] and Prime Minister, and the posts of Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, and Interior Minister, or whether it sets the tone for a new, more permanent mode of security policymaking. Further research is needed on the APM case in the context of securitisation and democratic oversight in Finnish security policymaking, as well as on comparable cases in other NATO countries.

6.3 Lessons from Ukraine: Some caveats regarding the APM

Given the importance assigned to lessons from the war in Ukraine in guiding the APM decision, some points of contention may be raised regarding such lessons. First, there is a certain paradox in the expected utility of APM in relation to their typical strategic effects. APM are often judged to produce or contribute to prolonged wars of attrition with little mobility; such has also been the case in Ukraine.[133] Meanwhile, the FDF highlights that it wishes at all costs to avoid attritional warfare and maintain manoeuvrability, an argument used *in favour* of APM.[134] In other words, although APM tend to lead to attritional warfare, the FDF wants to use it to achieve the *opposite* effect. Some experts point out that as long as Finnish APM remain relatively easy to clear, they should support rather than weaken the manoeuvrability of Finnish infantry.[135] Nevertheless, the compatibility of the two perspectives remains counterintuitive, and using APM for this purpose could prove counterproductive.

Second, it cannot automatically be taken for granted that what is being witnessed in Ukraine today would apply to a future conflict involving Russia. The massive

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[132] As is customary, President Alexander Stubb formally renounced his party affiliation at the beginning of his mandate.

[133] Thornton and Miron, "European Countries."

[134] Huhtanen, "Keskitien kenraali."

[135] Interview 2; Huhtanen, "Keskitien kenraali."

use of infantry should not be assumed to be Russia's general "future way of war."[136] Especially in the longer run, Russia may be learning and adapting its strategy and tactics. Moreover, in a different strategic and geographical context, such as a conflict in Finland, Russian strategy and tactics might look different from the outset from those seen in Ukraine. In particular, NATO strategy emphasises air power, and NATO has a clear advantage in this regard relative to Russia. This could have consequences for the relevance of the APM. Nuanced consideration should also be given to how the utility of different types of APM, such as permanent, scatterable, and self-neutralising models, varies with circumstances. On the other hand, for a NATO ally such as Finland, the use of APM may pose challenges that have not arisen for Ukraine. In case of conflict, interoperability would be of far greater interest and a far greater concern for Finland and the other countries withdrawing from the Ottawa Treaty than it is for Ukraine. For these countries, the possession and use of APM could constitute an unfortunate hurdle to allied assistance if legal and military adjustments are not made.

Third, Finnish policymakers and the FDF have underscored Finland's "responsible" APM practices, especially the careful mapping and tracking of each emplaced mine. However, such responsible practices cannot be guaranteed, least of all in the chaos of war. Compared to eastern Ukraine, the Finnish border region is relatively sparsely populated, and risks to civilians are lower. Yet they are likely not as negligible as Finnish representatives claim them to be: although emplacing mines is easy, mapping them adequately is much more complicated.[137] The predominance of such responsible-use arguments could suggest a logic based on an exceptionalist fallacy. Overall, caution and nuance are advised in drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine for other countries threatened by Russia, especially NATO member states.

[136] Dara Massicot, "How Russia Recovered: What the Kremlin Is Learning From the War in Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, October 8, 2025, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/russia/how-russia-recovered#; Konrad Muzyka, Samuel Bendett and Aleksandr Golts, "The Future Russian Way of War, Part 3: Military Reform," *SCEEUS Guest Report No. 4 2025*. Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies (SCEEUS) at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, November 7, 2025, https://www.ui.se/globalassets/ui.se-eng/publications/other-publications/russias-way-of-war-part-3-military-reform_sceeus-guest-report_2025.pdf.

[137] Kervinen, "Tutkijan mukaan"; interview 1.

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List of interviews

Interviews were carried out in person in Stockholm and Enköping, as well as online and by telephone, between February and April 2026. The interviewees, who wish to be anonymous, work at the following institutions:

Finnish National Defence University

Swedish Defence University

Finnish Defence Forces

Finnish independent defence analyst

Finnish journalist (media associated)

Finnish Ministry of Defence

Swedish Armed Forces

Swedish Ministry of Defence

Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 2025, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic states announced their withdrawal from the Ottawa Treaty and the reintroduction of the anti-personnel mine (APM) into their defences. Bordering Russia, the countries justified the decision by citing the deterioration in the security situation. Using Finland as a case study, this report examines more closely the factors that enabled the ban on APM in the past and prompted its reintroduction in 2025. The identified factors include political shifts in Finland and internationally, Finland's domestic demographic and economic conditions, and changing assessments of Russia's strategy and tactics.

The report also explores and lays out the implications of reintroducing APM for collective defence within NATO. Ensuring interoperability will pose a particular challenge for cooperation between Finland and Sweden, given the two countries' extensive defence ties and the strict Swedish interpretation of the Ottawa Treaty. The allies will therefore need to find ways to balance operational needs with their obligations under international law.

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