
WHY JAPAN SIGNED THE MINE BAN TREATY

The Political Dynamics behind the Decision

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Abstract

This article clarifies the dynamics of Japan's decision-making process regarding its signing of the Mine Ban Treaty, analyzing the influence of non-governmental organizations on policymakers. It will demonstrate that this case was atypical in the Japanese decision-making process and that NGOs, with the support of domestic and international public opinion, can overcome entrenched bureaucratic policies.

In December 1997 in Ottawa, more than 120 nations signed a remarkable document, the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Commonly known as the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT)¹ or the Ottawa Convention, the treaty completely prohibits APLs, which were used by many nations at that time. Within nine months, 40 countries, the minimum number, had ratified the treaty and it took effect. The international political

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1. The treaty prohibits the production, use, and export of Anti-Personnel Land mines (APLs), as well as obliges signatories to destroy their APL stockpiles within four years and mines already buried within 10 years, without exceptions or exemptions. However, in cases where a state party is not able to meet this obligation, it may apply to a meeting of the state parties or a review conference for an extension of up to 10 years. As of December 2004, 152 nations had signed the treaty and 144 nations had ratified it. See <<http://www.icbl.org>>.

Asian Survey, Vol. 45, Issue 3, pp. 397–413, ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X.
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process that led to the MBT, the so-called Ottawa Process, is attracting the attention of academics and policymakers.²

Japan, one of the signatories, ratified the treaty on September 30, 1998, becoming a founding member country. Because Japan has tackled disarmament issues earnestly for some years, it may seem natural that Tokyo would support a total ban on APLs. In fact, however, the government was far from supportive of such a ban. Even after the Ottawa Process began in 1996, Japan continued to take a more or less negative stance on the issue, even withdrawing from the process at one point. Nevertheless, in December 1997, Japan had reversed itself and joined the signing ceremony.

This article will clarify Japan's decision-making on the MBT—a process poorly examined both domestically and abroad—by focusing on the influence of NGOs. This analysis will demonstrate that the road to the MBT constituted an atypical Japanese decision-making process and that NGOs, with the support of domestic as well as international public opinion, can influence politicians' attitudes and overcome entrenched bureaucratic policies, even on security issues.³

The APL Issue in Japan

Even after the land mine issue began to attract international attention in the 1990s, the Japanese government steadfastly maintained its position that the APL was a weapon indispensable for national security.⁴ The JDA had two main arguments for upholding this view. The first stated that APLs were imperative to preserve Japan's exclusively defense-oriented military doctrine. The rationale was that East Asia is far from stable or peaceful and the threat of foreign invasion can never be entirely dispelled. Of Japan's 18,649 kilometers of coastline, approximately 7,000 kilometers are sandy beaches vulnerable to invading forces. Therefore, land mines were viewed as a necessary deterrent in Japan's defense.

2. Regarding the formation process of this treaty, see Maxwell A. Cameron, Robert J. Lawson, and Brian W. Tomlin, eds., *To Walk without Fear: The Global Movement to Ban Landmines* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Kenki Adachi, "Taijijirai Zenpai Rejimu Keiseikatei no Bunseki" [Toward a total ban of anti-personnel landmines: An analysis of a regime formation process], *Kokusai Seiji* [International Relations] 130 (May 2002).

3. It is widely believed that bureaucrats dominate the decision-making process in Japan. For example, see Kiyooki Tsuji, *Nihon Kanryousei no Kenkyu* [Research on Japanese bureaucracy] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1969). Recent case studies showed that politicians exerted stronger influence than bureaucrats in some issue areas. Still, the influence of NGO or public opinion in decision making is thought to be minimal. See Minoru Nakano, *Gendai Nihon no Seisaku Katei* [Policy process in contemporary Japan] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1992), pp. 83–132.

4. *Nihon no Bouei 1990* [Defense of Japan 1990] (Tokyo: Japan Defense Agency [JDA], 1990), pp. 126, 132.

The second argument was that because Japan is surrounded by the sea, its use of APLs is limited only to Japanese territory. In 1967, Japan had announced the Three Principles on Arms Exports, and in 1976 the Takeo Miki administration interpreted this declaration as completely prohibiting the export of land mines; the country has since strictly followed this interpretation. The government maintained that because of these limitations on use, Japan's mines could not be blamed for harming victims in other countries; they were simply a weapon needed to protect Japanese territory and civilians. Some observers felt that the JDA might have used these arguments rhetorically to mask its efforts to block budget cuts for national defense.⁵ But there was wide acceptance of the JDA's claim that APLs were critical to national security and Japan's defense-oriented posture. Thus, Japan's stockpile of land mines was not regarded as part of the international APL problem.

Although interest in the land mine problem was growing internationally from the early 1990s, the APL issue failed to arouse public opinion in Japan. That was partly because virtually no Japanese NGOs specialized in APL matters and partly because the Japanese mass media gave scant attention to the issue. One exception was Kazumoto Momose of the *Asahi Shimbun* (Asahi News) editorial board. Momose himself had suffered serious injury to his shoulder in a 1980 land mine accident while reporting on the Iran-Iraq War. In his articles, he repeatedly used the phrase, "*Akuma no Heiki Jirai*" (Land mine: The Devil's weapon) to emphasize the inhumane nature of APLs; this would later have a strong influence on the land mine issue in Japan.⁶

From the time Momose began to write vigorously about the APL issue in 1994, domestic NGOs had gradually been stirred to action. For example, the Association for Aiding Refugees/Japan (AARJ) started to investigate how to educate the public in order to foster domestic interest in the mine issue, although progress was slow. In the meantime, the Japanese government rigidly maintained its position that land mines were necessary for national defense.

From the CCW to the Ottawa Process

International talks began in September 1995 over revising the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) to strengthen land mine regulations. However, the talks were conducted by consensus and often became deadlocked, so it was not until May 1996 that a revised protocol was finally adopted.⁷

5. Author interview with Yukihsa Fujita, September 6, 2000, Tokyo.

6. Author interview with Kazumoto Momose, April 24, 2001, Tokyo. For example, he had four articles printed on consecutive days that were entitled "Landmine: The Devil's Weapon," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 4-7, 1995.

7. Protocol II of the 1980 CCW banned the indiscriminate use of land mines as well as their use against civilians. However, this protocol amounted to nothing more than limiting the use of

Even after the CCW Review Conference concluded, the land mine issue failed to attract much attention in Japan. Meanwhile, the government finally made an official announcement about APLs at the end of May. In a statement entitled “Regarding Japan’s Decision on Supporting the Abolishment of Anti-personnel Land mines,” Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto expressed his support for international cooperation aimed at eliminating APLs. He also announced voluntary interim measures until an international agreement could be reached on completely abolishing land mines, as follows:⁸

- Japan will advance the necessary measures to modify its APLs into self-destructing land mines.
- Japan will not acquire new supplies of land mines without self-destructing mechanisms.
- Japan will not use land mines without self-destructing mechanisms, even in cases where such use is permitted under the CCW Revised Protocol.
- Japan will promptly pursue the study of alternative weapons to land mines, namely weapons that pose no risk of damage or injury to civilians.

At first glance, this statement appeared to offer an active view toward the abolition of land mines. While it does in fact extol cooperative support for eliminating APLs, on closer inspection the statement reveals that Japan intended to continue using APLs with self-neutralizing mechanisms. Furthermore, unless an international agreement abolishing land mines was concluded, Japan’s previous position of holding APLs would remain in place.

Prime Minister Hashimoto himself had been in favor of demonstrating a more positive stance on this matter.⁹ In the wake of his personal support for a ban, pressure grew within the administration in support of abolition. In response to such pressure, the JDA launched a study on the possible impact that

land mines, and the vague definitions, exception clauses, and loopholes in the charter prevented it from effectively reducing the number of APL victims. The revised Protocol II also fell well short of a total ban on land mines. For details of the limitations of Protocol II and its revised version, see Masahiko Asada, “Taijinjirai no Kokusaiteki Kisei: Jirai Giteisho Kara Otawa Jyoyaku He” [International regulations on anti-personnel land mines: From the Land mine Protocol to Ottawa Treaty], *Kokusai Mondai* [International Affairs] (Tokyo), no. 461 (August 1998), pp. 45–68.

8. Available at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/summit/1996/landmines.html>>, accessed August 2004.

9. Hashimoto had personally experienced the potential horror of land mines, so he was well aware of their inhumanity. This incident occurred when Hashimoto visited the village of Panmunjom on the border between North and South Korea. A lawmaker accompanying Hashimoto urgently needed to go to the toilet and headed for some nearby bushes. At this point, a South Korean soldier immediately lunged toward the lawmaker, warning, “This area is very dangerous because there are land mines buried all around. If you stray even a little from the set path, I cannot guarantee your personal safety.” The lawmaker was apparently beside himself with fear but managed to walk 20 minutes to the nearest toilet. Yukihiisa Fujita, “Chikyu Shimin to Shite no Kokusai Kyouryoku” [International cooperation as global citizens], *Ideal Family* (Tokyo) (May 1999), p. 18.

elimination of land mines would have on current defense policy. At a press conference on June 13, Joint Staff Council Chairman Shigeru Sugiyama stated, "We must take the international trends fully into consideration," indicating that he was aware of the global movement toward abolishing land mines.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the APL issue arose for the first time as a question in Parliament. On June 14, New Party Sakigake representative Seiji Maehara declared that Japan should respect the fact that the CCW Revised Protocol was adopted in May, stating that "[w]e should work with the international society to not just limit the use of land mines, but go one step further and completely abolish them." In response to these comments, the JDA reaffirmed its position that land mines were essential for the agency to fulfill its duty of protecting the peace and security of Japan.¹¹ The posture of the government had not changed; it endorsed increasing support for mine victims and the continued use of APLs with self-destructing mechanisms. At the Lyon Summit as well as at the U.N. General Assembly, Japan reiterated its positive stance on assisting with mine clearance and mine victims. It seemed that the Japanese government was attempting to wipe away the impression that it was pouring cold water on the APL abolition issue by increasing support for mine casualties and land mine clearance, even while it continued to hold these weapons.

About this time, it became apparent that Japanese NGOs were finally adopting an earnest stance toward the land mine problem. The AARJ published a picture book in September with the initial objective of contributing the proceeds to efforts at clearing land mines.¹² The book was credited for helping raise awareness among children and housewives who, until this point, had been demographic groups showing only slight interest in the issue. The first publication run of 20,000 copies sold out completely within a month, and animosity toward land mines gradually began to swell within Japan. As the Ottawa Conference drew nearer, Japanese interest in the land mine issue slowly but steadily flourished. However, on the whole at this point, the voices criticizing Japan's intention to continue possessing land mines were still feeble and lacked impact.

The Beginning of the Ottawa Process

Since the revised CCW fell far short of a total ban on APLs, the October 1996 Ottawa Conference invited only those nations supporting the elimination of

10. *Asahi Shimbun*, June 13, 1996; *ibid.*, June 14, 1996.

11. See *Congressional Record of the House of Representatives (CRHR) of the National Security Committee during the 136th Regular Diet Session*, no. 9 (Tokyo: Printing Bureau), p. 5.

12. Fusako Yanase, *Jirai Dewanaku Hana wo Kudasai* [Not mines, but flowers] (Tokyo: Jiyukokuminsha, 1996). According to the organization, more than half a million copies have been printed and "proceeds from these books have contributed to anti-landmine activities (mine action) in such countries as Cambodia and Afghanistan." See <<http://www.aarjapan.gr.jp/english/sunny/index.html>>.

land mines on a “self-selection” basis.¹³ Although the Tokyo government still insisted that APLs were indispensable for national defense,¹⁴ Japan decided to formally attend the conference. At the closing ceremony, Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy declared that another conference would be held in Ottawa in December the following year, at which a signing ceremony for a treaty abolishing land mines would be conducted. This was the start of the so-called Ottawa Process. However, the Japanese media provided only minimal coverage of the conference itself; yet again, Kazumoto Momose was the sole reporter to write in detail about the proceedings, urging the Japanese government to take a positive stance on APL elimination.¹⁵

In December 1996, Japan was one of 88 countries that co-sponsored a U.N. resolution recommending enactment of a total ban on land mines. However, this did not mean that Japan intended to halt its own use of APLs. In fact, a total of ¥ 700 million (US\$6.4 million) was appropriated in the 1997 budget for their procurement.

However, at this time, a dramatic change occurred in the Diet: an NGO member was elected to Parliament for the first time. In October 1996, Yukihisa Fujita, who had previously been involved in the AARJ, was elected to the House of Representatives under the banner of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in a Tokyo constituency. The AARJ had just published its picture book on land mines, and Fujita had introduced it at a DPJ training session, proposing that the movement to ban APLs be taken up by the party.¹⁶ A reported 4,000 copies were sold to politicians; many lawmakers from the DPJ, as well as from other parties, bought the book, which was instrumental in sparking a gradual awakening among Diet members to the land mine issue.

On December 5, Fujita brought up the land mine issue in a question period, insisting that Japan should take a more positive approach toward eliminating APLs.¹⁷ Other opposition lawmakers soon followed his lead. On December 12, Michio Sato of the party known as the Niin Club stressed to the upper house Foreign Affairs Committee the inhumanity of land mines and the need

13. The Canadian government sent a paper entitled “Criteria for Participation” to all the governments in June 1996, noting that states were “invited to ‘self-select’ for participation in the [upcoming] Ottawa Conference,” based on their willingness to support action on the mine issue. Canadian government, “Towards a Global Ban on Anti-Personnel (AP) Mines, International Strategy Conference-Ottawa, October 3–5, 1996, Criteria for Participation,” June 1996.

14. Japan had just developed the New Basic Defense Program in November 1995, but APLs were still regarded as indispensable for national defense. *Nihon no Bouei 1996* [Defense of Japan 1996] (Tokyo: JDA, 1996), pp. 171–78.

15. *Asahi Shimbun*, November 28, 1996.

16. Fujita interview.

17. See *Congressional Record of the House of Councilors (CRHC) of the Foreign Affairs Committee during the 139th Diet Session*, no. 1 (Tokyo: Printing Bureau), p. 11.

for Japan to take the lead in creating a treaty to ban them.¹⁸ Sato used the phrase “devil’s weapon” in his speech, illustrating just how far the influence of Momose’s reports had reached.

Increase of Pro-Ban Lawmakers

Voices critical of the government’s policy were beginning to grow louder in the Diet. In an attempt to illustrate Japan’s positive efforts to deal with the APL issue, the government held the Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Land Mines on March 6 and 7, 1997. However, the topic of land mine abolition was absent from the agenda. In response to queries in the Diet, the government’s answer remained consistent: Japan supported international efforts toward complete elimination of APLs, but until such an agreement was concluded, the country would continue to abstain from using land mines that do not have self-neutralizing mechanisms. Japan insisted that it was not being negative about the APL issue because the country was actually playing an important role in mine clearance, the development of mine detection technology, and the provision of assistance to victims.¹⁹ The government was still desperately clinging to the position that although ultimately supporting the abolition of land mines, it still desired to continue possessing them.

Japanese NGOs were becoming aware that they needed to work together to put pressure on the government. This awareness took form on March 8 and 9 at the NGO Tokyo Conference ’97 for Anti-Personnel Land mines, sponsored by the AARJ. The NGO conference addressed total elimination of land mines, whereas the government had ensured that this topic was off the table at the earlier conference.

Of particular importance to concerned Japanese NGOs was the proposal put forward by Yasuhiro Kitagawa, a member of the People’s Forum on Cambodia (PFC), to form the Japan Campaign to Ban Land Mines (JCBL). There had been no coordination of activities among Japanese NGOs until that point, a factor that had rendered them somewhat ineffective. In order to create a competent and long-lasting movement to promote the abolition of land mines, Kitagawa stated that it was of the utmost importance to “establish a coordinated organization that would be a focal point for NGOs and a contact point for the government, the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL), and the NGOs from foreign countries.”²⁰ After the conference ended, participating groups, particularly the AARJ, PFC, and Tokyo YMCA laid the groundwork for establishing the JCBL in July.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

19. Comment by Foreign Minister Ikeda, *ibid.*

20. Report by Yasuhiro Kitagawa, “Activities of PFC Toward the Total Elimination of Land mines,” at the Sixth Agenda of the NGO Tokyo Conference ’97 for Anti-Personnel Land mines, Tokyo, March 9, 1997.

While these international conferences—one sponsored by the government, one by Japanese NGOs—were being held, newspapers and television stations began working on special coverage relating to land mines. Until then, most media reports had focused on the terror and inhumanity of land mines and international efforts to abolish them. By contrast, media attention now focused on the increase in reports criticizing Japan's lukewarm response and demanding that the government take more concrete measures against land mines.

A chorus of voices from the Diet, NGOs, and the media all demanded that the Japanese government take positive action. However, the government refused to budge from its position. When officials were questioned on April 1 at the upper house Foreign Affairs Committee about how the government could justify the use of APLs, they reiterated the view that APLs were essential to the security of Japan.²¹

Parliament member Fujita says he felt that the JDA, and to a lesser extent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), showed absolutely no indication of abandoning land mines. To counter this situation, he moved to set up a group called the Diet Members' League Promoting the Total Ban of Land Mines (the League) in order to pressure the officials and bureaucrats responsible for formulating Japanese policy. Fujita began by circulating a petition entitled "Diet Members' Appeal for Totally Banning Land Mines" (the Petition) among lawmakers, appealing for support of a total ban, but this plan soon ran into trouble. Although a number of opposition lawmakers signed the Petition, no Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers did; neither did any agree to join the League. Since the land mine issue was a matter of security policy, the ruling LDP leaned on its lawmakers to refrain from such involvement.²² Some supporters of the League demanded to forge ahead even without the involvement of the LDP, but Fujita decided to wait patiently for the party to come around.

Meanwhile, Kenji Kosaka of the New Frontier Party (NFP) also became heavily involved in the land mine problem. He agreed that the project would end in failure unless LDP lawmakers were involved. Thus, he invited Gen Nakatani to join the League. Nakatani was a good friend; they had been elected to the Diet at the same time under the LDP banner. They had also visited Cambodia together in 1994, where they met land mine survivors and gained a greater understanding of the problem. Kosaka regarded Nakatani, with his knowledge of the APL issue, as the most suitable LDP lawmaker to be invited to join the League. Nakatani, a graduate of the National Defense Academy who had served in the Ground Self-Defense Forces (SDF), was the LDP's National

21. *CRHC of the Foreign Affairs Committee during the 140th Diet Session* (Tokyo: Printing Bureau), no. 8, p. 3.

22. Fujita interview; Fujita, "Chikyu Shimin," pp. 15–16; interview with Gen Nakatani, February 15, 2001, Tokyo.

Defense division chairman, a post that made it highly unlikely he would support land mine abolition. However, Nakatani leaned toward looking at the APL issue from a humanitarian viewpoint: “When we consider the carnage inflicted on non-combatants by land mines even after hostilities have ended, there are no grounds for Japan to retain such weapons.”²³ He was also quoted as saying, “Although abolishing land mines may cause national security problems, humanitarian considerations tell us that these weapons should not be used.”²⁴

Despite his feelings on the issue, Nakatani’s prominent position in the LDP made him understandably hesitant about joining the League. However, by mid-April 1997, he had agreed to take the post of acting chairman of the League, which was going to be established in June, saying, “If we are to eliminate APLs, now is the time when we must take action.”²⁵ There was considerable disapproval of Nakatani’s decision within the JDA and among the LDP defense *zoku* (party members with a specific interest in a policy issue or region).²⁶ Several agency officials visited Nakatani shortly after his announcement in an attempt to convince him of the merits of retaining land mines. Nakatani responded to these appeals by stating, “As domestic and international opinion on this issue heats up, we should consider the cost of rejecting the MBT. We should base our decision on the humanitarian position of popular will.”²⁷ Nakatani himself was well aware of both the strategic utility of land mines and the burdens of mine clearance, and also the suffering caused by these weapons.²⁸ His decision to join the League had a great impact on the LDP, whose lawmakers followed suit in increasing numbers.

At about this time, Yukihiisa Fujita’s personal network had brought about closer cooperation among NGOs. The AARJ, which had heard about Fujita’s efforts to collect signatories to the Petition, set about convincing more lawmakers to support the project. One special target was Yasuhiro Nakasone, the only post-war Japanese prime minister to have served as Defense Agency chief and who remained a very influential figure in shaping defense policy. The AARJ reasoned that if they could convince Nakasone to support their cause, persuading other lawmakers would become a much easier proposition. In May, AARJ Vice President Tadamasu Fukiura visited Nakasone and requested that he show

23. Fukiura Tadamasu, Yanase Fusako, and Osa Yukie, eds., *Jirai wo Nakusou: Jirai Dewanaku Hana wo Kudasai 50man Dokusha Karano Shitsumon* [Get rid of mines: Questions from the 500,000 readers of *Not Mines, but Flowers*] (Tokyo: Jiyukokuminsha, 2000), p. 204.

24. *Mainichi Shimbun* [Mainichi News], October 23, 1997.

25. Nakatani interview.

26. Many have policy-making experience at the ministerial level.

27. Nakatani interview.

28. *Kochi Shimbun* [Kochi News] (Kochi), October 1, 1998.

support for the movement to abolish land mines. Nakasone agreed on the spot, saying, "This is not a military issue but a humanitarian matter."²⁹

At the lower house Foreign Affairs Committee on April 22, lawmakers, including those from the LDP, erupted in bitter criticism of the government's stance. Gaku Ishizaki, a LDP lawmaker, urged the government to participate in the Ottawa Process and eliminate land mines, referring to APLs as "weapons of the devil." The stinging attack continued at the hands of Kaneshige Wakamatsu and Satoshi Shima of the NFP, Yukihiisa Fujita of the DPJ, Zenmei Matsumoto of the Japan Communist Party, Nobuto Hosaka of the Social Democratic Party, and Hirofumi Hirano, an independent politician.³⁰

Despite such mounting pressure, Tokyo was not swayed. The government reaffirmed the necessity of land mines and flatly stated that it had no intention of relinquishing the right to possess them. Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda made plain the government's negative stance toward creation of a strict anti-mine treaty: "At present, it is too soon to create a comprehensive treaty through the Ottawa Process."³¹ As Matsumoto had pointed out during his speech to the committee, the primary factor in this posture was not the overall sentiment among MOFA officials, but rather, the views of the foreign minister and cabinet. The DPJ's Fujita thought MOFA was of the view that Japan should join the MBT and abolish land mines; he felt the real problem lay with Foreign Minister Ikeda, who had displayed no interest in or understanding of the APL issue.³² Ikeda had served as JDA chief following a cabinet reshuffle in 1990 and was a pillar among the defense *zoku*. He had also been president of the Taiyukai, a service club for retired SDF officials. It can be reasoned that Ikeda's position as foreign minister at this time had a large bearing on the ministry's inability to confront the land mine issue. The administration remained cool to the Ottawa Process, repeatedly espousing the necessity of land mines; it decided not to participate but to observe in the subsequent Brussels Conference.

From Brussels to Oslo

The official follow-up meeting to the Ottawa Conference was held in Brussels from June 24 to June 27, 1997. The focus of this conference was on how many countries would sign the Brussels Declaration, under which signatory nations would take part in final negotiations in Oslo by accepting the principle of creating a treaty to comprehensively ban APLs.

29. Interview with Yukie Osa, deputy secretary-general of the AARJ, November 28, 1998, Tokyo; *Asahi Shimbun*, November 11, 1997.

30. *CRHR of the Foreign Affairs Committee during the 140th Diet Session* (Tokyo: Printing Bureau), no. 11, pp. 1–26.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

32. Interview with Fujita, September 9, 2000, Tokyo; Fujita, "Chikyū Shimin," p. 17.

When the Brussels Conference opened, the MOFA and JDA were still firmly opposed to abolishing land mines. In June, just before the conference began, Foreign Minister Ikeda stated, “Japan believes that a comprehensive global treaty is indeed desirable, but we consider the signing of any such treaty before the end of this year to be premature.”³³ To intensify the pressure on the defiant government, a group of lawmakers led by Yukihiro Fujita had been collecting signatures for the Petition. Fujita managed to collect 385 signatures from various political parties, including those of seven former prime ministers³⁴ and, as he passed the Petition to Prime Minister Hashimoto, pressed the government to participate in the Ottawa Process. Hashimoto, himself comparatively supportive of the movement, responded in a forward-looking manner that he “wanted this group to continue applying pressure on the government.”³⁵ Immediately after this meeting, Hashimoto demanded that the JDA show him why Japan would be unable to defend itself without land mines. The prime minister was unable to garner a satisfactory answer and at this point leaned more and more toward the elimination of mines.

To further squeeze the administration, the lawmakers officially launched the League in June. As mentioned earlier, LDP members were inclined to participate after Gen Nakatani had led the way. Both the formation of the League and the Petition applied considerable pressure to the government. Japan attended the Brussels Conference as an observer but despite calls from these lawmakers, decided not to sign the Brussels Declaration, on the grounds that signing the Ottawa Treaty in December would be very problematic. With this decision, Japan formally withdrew from the Ottawa Process.

Criticism of the government’s position continued to mount. In particular, the establishment of the JCBL on July 19, enabled NGOs to present a united front in their efforts to sway the government. By working together under the JCBL, NGOs could share information and partially alleviate their lack of resources and personnel. Also important was the fact that the JCBL treated its member NGOs respectfully, a point that reflected the relationship between the JCBL and the ICBL. Although NGOs all shared the objective of eliminating land mines, they could contribute to this goal in their own way and were not pushed toward other agendas.³⁶ The formation and support of

33. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* [Nihon Keizai News], June 23, 1997.

34. The seven former prime ministers were Yasuhiro Nakasone, Noboru Takeshita, Toshiki Kaifu, Kiichi Miyazawa, Morihiro Hosokawa, Tsutomu Hata, and Tomiichi Murayama. The Diet Members’ League Promoting the Total Ban of Land Mines, *List of the Diet Members Who Signed the Diet Members’ Appeal for Totally Banning Land Mines as of June 12, 1997*, unpublished document.

35. Fujita, “Chikyu Shimin,” p. 18.

36. Interview with Toshihiro Shimizu, Steering Committee member of JCBL, June 13, 2000, Tokyo.

this loose-knit network gave vitality to the JCBL and tremendously benefited each NGO.

The launch of the League in June and the JCBL in July boosted pressure on the government. The mass media also continued to bring up the APL issue and show their disapproval of the government's response, leading to increasingly fierce public criticism of how the administration was handling the matter. In addition, a total of 97 nations, including France and the United Kingdom, became signatories to the declaration, brightening the prospects for a global treaty to be created from the Ottawa Process. Nevertheless, Japan continued to insist that it would possess APLs. The JDA, in particular, pressed the point; concerned about domestic and international pressures, agency officials visited important lawmakers from both houses of the Diet and attempted to convince them that Japan should eschew any treaty banning APLs.³⁷

Toward Participation in the Oslo Conference

According to League Chief Secretary Fujita, Foreign Ministry officials had actually been quite positive on the issue of abolition since the summer, and he felt no need to press the ministry further. However, as noted, Foreign Minister Ikeda showed no interest in the matter. In the JDA, opinion was mixed; during a conversation with ranking officials, Fujita got the impression some were prepared to distance themselves from the agency's rigid position. Gen Nakatani said in an interview that he shared this opinion.³⁸ A major-general expressed similar sentiments at a meeting in September with military analyst Kazuhisa Ogawa: "Since Japan proclaims pacifism, it is in Japan's national interest to lead the trend of a global flat ban on APLs toward world peace and disarmament, earn international trust to put on [*sic*] diplomatic clout, and thereby increase national security. The value of this diplomatic coup would more than make up for the hole in military defense pricked by the ban on APLs, and this hole would not be large anyway."³⁹

In fact, it appeared as though JDA directors were the only officials who persistently held a negative view of the treaty. In Fujita's view, they felt a sense of crisis from a systematic defensive viewpoint⁴⁰ and believed that "rejecting land mines equates to a rejection of the Ground SDF itself."⁴¹ These officials appeared to be concerned that the elimination of land mines could spread to other weapons and lead to budget cuts. Their justifications for this stance also

37. Fukiura, Yanase, and Osa, *Jirai wo Nakusou*, pp. 201–02.

38. Fujita interview, September 9, 2000; Nakatani interview.

39. Kazuhisa Ogawa, "After Ottawa: East Asia's Challenge," *Report of the NGO Tokyo Conference '98 on Anti-Personnel Land mines* (Tokyo: AARJ, 1998), p. 97.

40. Fujita interview, September 9, 2000.

41. *Asahi Shimbun*, October 19, 1997.

included Japan's security alliance with the U.S. and the possibility of the use of land mines by U.S. forces in Japan if it were invaded.⁴²

In the meantime, the League persevered in its efforts to persuade these directors. Nakatani's high-ranking position within the League was helpful in the process of convincing JDA officials; he made good use of his personal network and close relationships with former SDF associates who were now working in the agency. As an LDP lawmaker—a National Defense Division chief, no less—Nakatani had far more persuasive impact on those holding up the process than an opposition lawmaker could have had.⁴³

The League, as well as lobbying directly with government offices, also proactively played an important role as a bridge between NGOs and the government. In particular, Fujita, who had originally been involved in the AARJ, was known as the “NGO Parliament branch chief” for his work as a link between both sides. On August 19, the JCBL submitted to Prime Minister Hashimoto a petition signed by 56 NGOs demanding that Japan participate in the September Oslo Conference. The League had been instrumental in arranging the direct presentation of the petition to the prime minister, with Nakatani in attendance. It is highly unlikely that the petition could have been submitted directly without the League's involvement. With the League's help, the JCBL was also busy drumming up grassroots support for the abolition of APLs.

Amid these developments, the Japanese government's stance hit a snag when, on August 18, the U.S. announced that it would participate in the Ottawa Process. Until then, Japan had taken a dim view of the process, saying, “Japan cannot support a process that only accepts supporting nations, with no exceptions or exemptions. If Russia and the U.S. do not take part, the process will not be effective at all.”⁴⁴ The U.S. decision destroyed Japan's argument. The JCBL, now riding the momentum created by international trends, submitted another petition to Hashimoto calling for Japan to sign the Ottawa Treaty and urging Tokyo to join the Ottawa Process. At a press conference on August 26, JDA chief Fumio Kyuma displayed a willingness to participate in Oslo: “If the debate will incorporate some exceptions, then would it not be all right for Japan to take part?”⁴⁵ Clearly, Tokyo, which had not altered its stance on the necessity and use of APLs, decided to follow the U.S. to Oslo so that it could speak during treaty negotiations and submit a revised treaty draft, a move that inevitably would create friction as participants tried to produce a final draft.

42. Fujita interview, September 9, 2000; *Asahi Shimbun*, October 15, 1997; Fukiura, Yanase, and Osa, *Jirai wo Nakusou*, pp. 201–02.

43. Nakatani interview; Fujita interview, September 9, 2000; Shimizu interview.

44. Statement by then-Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda, *Nikkei Shimbun* [Nikkei News], June 23, 1997.

45. *Asahi Shimbun*, August 27, 1997.

Toward the Signing of the MBT

The Oslo Conference convened to discuss the text of the MBT, from September 1 to 18. Neither the United States nor Japan gained any support for their proposals to revise the text. As a result, an extremely strict convention on the prohibition of APLs—permitting no exceptions or exemptions—was adopted.

After the conclusion of the Oslo Conference, the JCBL and other NGOs criticized Tokyo's stance through the mass media. Nevertheless, the Japanese government, referring to America's stated intention not to sign the MBT adopted at Oslo, hardened its position and said it would not become a signatory unless the treaty's effectiveness "could be guaranteed." However, a surprise development occurring the day after the adoption of the MBT proposal became the catalyst for a dramatic change in Japan's approach. Keizo Obuchi, who had assumed the post of foreign minister during a cabinet reshuffle on September 11, at a press conference voiced his objection to Japan's refusal to sign the MBT. Obuchi stated, "Japan is helping with the clearance of land mines in Cambodia. For Japan not to recognize the [Ottawa] treaty does not make sense to me. . . . We must observe the trends of the world and do the things that we have to do."⁴⁶ MOFA downplayed the comment at the time as being "merely the personal view of the Minister."⁴⁷ However, even from the beginning, there was considerable support in the ministry for abolition. Global calls for eliminating land mines had strengthened following the death of Britain's Princess Diana, who had pressed for abolition, and MOFA officials gradually tended toward this view. Amid the debate, Prime Minister Hashimoto stated, "The strengthening of public opinion toward the treaty cannot be ignored," and instructed officials in the JDA and MOFA to work toward signing the MBT. Momentum toward Japan's becoming a treaty signatory greatly accelerated.⁴⁸

Although domestic and international public opinion was growing in favor of eliminating land mines and the view that their abolition seemed inevitable was beginning to take hold, the JDA still refused to budge from the position that land mines were a necessity. However, with Prime Minister Hashimoto's instruction to work toward signing the treaty and the gradual shift within MOFA, the JDA's stance became increasingly untenable. Still, the agency held out, proposing four conditions for a change of direction: (1) an increase of 7,000 personnel for the Ground SDF, (2) enhanced deployment of surface-to-air missiles, (3) a ¥ 50 billion (\$417 million) budget to develop alternative weapons, and (4) postponement of the signing for five years until relevant

46. *Ibid.*, September 19, 1997.

47. *Shukan Aera* [Weekly Aera] (Tokyo), October 27, 1997, p. 72.

48. *Yomiuri Shimbun* [Yomiuri News], December 4, 1997.

domestic legislation could be approved.⁴⁹ The conditions themselves constituted, at the very least, a refusal to sign the convention at the end of the year in Ottawa, if not a complete rejection of the Ottawa Treaty itself. As such, they were unacceptable to Hashimoto and Foreign Minister Obuchi.

During the 141st Extraordinary Session of Parliament, many lawmakers, taking into account Obuchi's remarks and the growing public support for the abolition of land mines, actively pressed the government to sign the MBT. On October 9, the League also formally asked that the government participate in the MBT. While the struggle to persuade the JDA continued, those endorsing the total elimination of APLs received a shot in the arm.

On October 10, the Ottawa Process gained further momentum when it was announced that the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines and its coordinator, Jody Williams, were to be jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The Nobel Prize Committee chairman stated that the award would "[a]lso serve as a message to world powers such as the United States which have no plan to sign the treaty." In addition to the U.S. and China, the chairman singled out Japan by name, stating, "I hope the Japanese government will change tack and become a signatory."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the JDA continued to call for the use of land mines: there was no government-wide consensus.

This impasse drew heavy criticism in the Diet. For example, at a meeting of the lower house Budget Committee the following day, Toshiko Hamayotsu of the Heisei-kai touched on the peace prize award and grilled the government on why Japan wanted to continue possessing land mines. In response, Defense Agency head Kyuma reiterated his assertion that because of the country's particular geographical characteristics and exclusively defense-oriented policy, land mines were extremely effective and he wanted Japan to continue to possess them.⁵¹

The mass media were universal in their calls for Japan to participate in the MBT. In response to calls from Parliament and the media, Prime Minister Hashimoto spoke on October 14, saying, "It was some time ago that I asked the JDA if land mines really were necessary and if there were no alternate methods,"⁵² thus pressing the JDA for a decision. At a news conference on October 14, Kyuma hinted at a possible policy revision: "Domestic and international public opinion is strengthening. We must accept this openly."⁵³ Bowing

49. Yukie Osa, "Keynote Speech of the NGO Tokyo Conference '98 on Anti-Personnel Land mines," *Report of the NGO Tokyo Conference '98*, p. 19.

50. *Asahi Shimbun*, October 11, 1997.

51. *CRHC of the Budget Committee during the 141st Diet Session* (Tokyo: Printing Bureau), no. 2, pp. 11–12.

52. See, for example, *Asahi Shimbun*, October 14, 1997, and *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, October 14, 1997.

53. *Asahi Shimbun*, October 14, 1997.

to this upsurge in world opinion, Australia, Greece, and Romania announced in October that they would sign the Ottawa Treaty, and the number of countries supporting the Ottawa Process continued to grow. However, Kyuma reasserted his view position that “it would be desirable if every country including China and the United States became signatories,” indicating that he planned to make a final decision after considering the direction of the United States and other nations.⁵⁴

The following day, the foreign minister himself set out to press the reluctant JDA for a decision. Obuchi met with Defense Policy Bureau chief Ken Sato to discuss the topic of signing the treaty and reaching a final decision. With this exchange, some voices from within the agency began to question whether land mines were essential and suggested that it would be difficult to use land mines indefinitely.⁵⁵ On October 21, Obuchi held a meeting with Kyuma at Parliament, whereby they finally agreed that Japan would become a signatory to the MBT. One important factor in the JDA chief’s change of heart was the fact that Kyuma was a member of a faction headed by Obuchi.⁵⁶

Following this, at a meeting with the prime minister and Chief Cabinet Secretary Kanezo Muraoka, Kyuma showed understanding toward Hashimoto’s request to give the nod to signing the convention, and the government thus entered the final stages of becoming a signatory to the MBT. Still, Kyuma had two requests: (1) take steps to establish a sufficient budget for developing alternative weapons to land mines, and (2) consult with the United States, which was still wary of signing the treaty.⁵⁷ Compared with the JDA’s initial conditions, these requests can be seen as backpedaling and illustrate that the agency, under pressure from public opinion, had no alternative but to acquiesce. At a meeting of the lower house Special Committee for the Promotion of Fiscal Restructuring, Kyuma conceded that he had agreed to sign the MBT because of the pressure of domestic and international public opinion. At this time, the United States had already informally told Japan it planned to accept Tokyo’s decision. So Kyuma’s second request was unlikely to be a serious obstacle. With this, the government finally moved the signing of the MBT to the cabinet stage, where it could tackle related legislation and eventual disposal of Japan’s land mine stockpile. On December 4, Foreign Minister Obuchi himself signed the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Land Mines in Ottawa.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., October 15, 19, 1997.

56. Later, Kyuma told Fujita that because Obuchi, the leader of his faction, had been extremely positive toward the elimination of land mines, he (Kyuma) had recognized that the total abolition of APLs had been inevitable to a certain extent from an early stage. Fujita interview, September 9, 2000.

57. *Asahi Shimbun*, October 21, 1997.

Concluding Remarks

This article attempts to analyze the political process that led Japan to sign the MBT, focusing on the influence of NGOs in the decision-making process. Initially, no Japanese NGO dealt specifically with the land mine issue, so there was almost no tangible way to inject the issue into the political process. However, the movement to ban land mines was growing internationally, and this effort was disseminated to more and more Japanese people through the country's print and broadcast media. Domestic NGOs steadily began to accelerate their activities demanding the elimination of APLs. Via action by these NGOs and the mass media, as well as growing support from the international community, the voices calling for the abolition of APLs spread through the political process. The election of an NGO member, Yukihiisa Fujita, to the Diet ensured that a communications channel for these voices would be maintained. Public support for the elimination of APLs gained a foothold among lawmakers, with calls for abolition growing dominant among parliamentarians. But with then-Defense Agency Chief Kyuma and then-Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda resolutely stressing the continued use of land mines, the Japanese delegation pulled out midway through the Ottawa Process. However, a cabinet reshuffle led to the arrival of a new foreign minister, Keizo Obuchi, who supported abolition. It is probably fair to say that Obuchi was influenced by the growing international and domestic voices calling for a total ban. Repeated references by Prime Minister Hashimoto and the JDA's Kyuma to international and domestic public opinion suggest they were also affected by the outcry. Consequently, Japan committed itself to becoming a signatory to the MBT. It may be too soon to conclude that in Japan NGOs strongly influence decision-making processes in general, but as outlined in this article, it can safely be said that the Japanese government was forced to abandon its land mine policy under pressure from NGOs and prevailing public opinion.