



Forecasting Demand for U.S. Ground Forces

Assessing Future Trends in Armed Conflict and U.S. Military Interventions

Matthew Lane, Bryan Frederick, Jennifer Kavanagh, Stephen Watts, Nathan Chandler, Meagan L. Smith

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This report identifies potential future demands for U.S. ground forces under different scenarios, including size, location, and capabilities. It is designed to help the U.S. Army manage risk across different potential strategic and operational concerns and inform decisions regarding Army future force planning, posture, and investments.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the potential and most likely demands for U.S. ground forces, including size, location, and capabilities, through 2040?
- How do these projections vary in different future scenarios?
- What are the implications of these forecasts for U.S. Army decisions regarding future force planning, posture, and investments?



KEY FINDINGS

This report describes a model that can be used to project trends in armed conflict and demands for U.S. ground forces through 2040 under different scenarios. In a baseline, or “no surprises” future:

- The risk of interstate war appears likely to increase, although it is likely to remain low by historical standards.
- The total demand for U.S. ground interventions is expected to decline slightly or remain the same, but this trend is accompanied by a projected increase in the forces required to meet the demands of these interventions.
- There is a substantial likelihood that there will be demand for a sizable U.S. stability operation between now and 2040.
- The Middle East, Eurasia, and East/Southeast Asia are the most likely locations for future demand for U.S. ground interventions, although locations vary across combat, deterrence, and stabilization missions.

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The report also describes the results of four alternative scenarios that differ dramatically from the anticipated baseline:

- The largest increases in demands for U.S. ground forces, including combat forces, were seen in the scenarios that model a Global Depression and a substantially more revisionist China.
- In the scenario that models a global pandemic, based on a reprise of the 1918–1920 Spanish Flu, the demand for U.S. ground forces increases only modestly from the baseline scenario, with increased demand strongest for deterrence and stability missions.
- In the scenario that models an isolationist United States, U.S. ground forces participate less in deterrence missions, but this reduction is offset by a forecasted increase in demand from combat missions.

