

making a dent in the global supply. In reality, though, determining the origin of fissile materials used in any bomb would not be difficult. Another alibi out.

Even if the sponsor state were identified, some argue, a victim might hesitate to retaliate if it wasn't completely positive that it had the right culprit. The authors respond with a pointed hypothetical: If Hezbollah bombed Israel, and Israel suspected Iran of contributing the weapons, is it possible to imagine that "Israel's leaders would be too restrained by their deep humanity and lingering doubts about sponsorship to retaliate harshly against Tehran?"

Instead of fretting aloud about the possibility of nuclear terrorism, Lieber and Press conclude, officials should be talking up their ability to zero in on any reckless perpetrator. The daunting risks of such an attack have deterred nuclear terrorism for more than six decades, and raising awareness of those risks is the best antidote we have to evil fantasies. ■

## THE AMAZONIAN EDGE

**THE SOURCE:** "What Women Bring to the Fight" by Ellen L. Haring, in *Parameters*, Summer 2013.

SERGEANT LEIGH ANN HESTER AND NINE other soldiers were trailing a military convoy in 2005 when about 50 Iraqi

insurgents launched an ambush. Braving machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades, Hester, along with her squad leader, successfully flanked and cleared two enemy trenches, killing three of the attackers. For her actions in combat, Hester was awarded the Silver Star—the first female soldier so honored since World War II.

Heroism has not been rare among women serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the blurring of battle lines has frequently put them in combat situations. They have won 1,800 combat action badges, and the Pentagon's decision in January to open combat positions to women will only increase the number of badges. But critics claim that gender integration will impair unit cohesion, damaging the "brotherhood" that bonds frontline troops together.

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Nonsense, says Colonel Ellen L. Haring, writing in *Parameters*, which is published by the U.S. Army War College. "New research suggests women can enhance the combat capabilities of

the military from the squad to the joint staff without impairing cohesion.”

There are two types of unit cohesion—“social cohesion,” or getting along, and “task cohesion,” which involves working together—and it’s the latter that’s more crucial to success. The social cohesion that critics fret about is a double-edged sword: too much of it, and a unit can fall into patterns of groupthink. Alternative perspectives and disagreement force everyone to up their game.

Women already serve in combat roles in other nations’ armed forces. Canada, for example, a U.S. partner in Afghanistan, has discovered no “negative effect on operational performance or team cohesion” since it integrated its military in the 1980s. Famously, women make up 34 percent of the Israel Defense Forces, and most combat jobs are open to them. Their commanders say the female soldiers “exhibit superior skills” when it comes to discipline, weapons use, and alertness.

Haring acknowledges the common argument that women lack the physical strength necessary for combat positions but points out that “it is about letting those women serve who can meet the physical standards.” Many women in military police units, such as Hester, regularly perform the same tasks as infantry troops, protecting supply lines and con-

ducting raids. In 2011, more than half of the female cadets at West Point met the same requirements as male cadets on the Army Physical Fitness Test.

Women will not only serve as ably as men—they’ll improve their units’ task cohesion. Recent research suggests that the larger the female component of a crowd, the greater its collective intelligence. “This may be due to a trait [researchers] call ‘social sensitivity,’” Haring says. “The ability to perceive and sense emotional changes leads to more collaborative patterns of group behavior, and women tend to score higher than men in this category.” Women are also less likely than men to dominate conversations—which further boosts a group’s collective intelligence. These results aren’t limited to the laboratory: According to one study, companies boasting at least three female members on their board of directors enjoyed better financial performance than those with none.

In the business world, just over 15 percent of leadership positions are held by women, and in the military it’s even less. Without more women in the platoons and top Pentagon jobs—usually filled by those who have held combat positions—the U.S. military won’t be as smart as it could be, Haring argues. “If the U.S. military wants to optimize its

teams' collective intelligence and make better executive-level decisions, we must tap into the half of the population that is underutilized." ■

## WE'RE ALL EXCEPTIONAL NOW

**THE SOURCE:** "The Age of Nationalism" by Paul R. Pillar, in *The National Interest*, September/October 2013.

STRATEGISTS ARE STILL STRUGGLING TO PIN a label on the period of international politics that began with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. It has been called everything from unipolar to multipolar to nonpolar and now, because of the rivalry between the United States and China, bipolar. Some contend that the era is defined by terrorism, while others speak of a clash of civilizations or even a looming World War incited by radical Islam. Pinning a label on the era we live in is more than a name game; it helps define how we think about international affairs. Paul Pillar, a former CIA official now affiliated with Georgetown University and the Brookings Institution, thinks he's figured it out. Welcome, he writes in *The National Interest*, to the Age of Nationalism.

That might sound rather passé. After all, the modern nation-state was born in

the mid-17th century, and nationalism flowered with the French Revolution. The ensuing century saw ceaseless tumult as Slavs, Italians, Germans, and others struggled to create sovereign states of their own. That brand of ethnic nationalism was the spark that famously ignited the first World War and set the stage for the second, which became an ideological conflict between fascism and its capitalist and communist antagonists.

**After World War II, clashing principles, not clashing peoples, were the new source of global conflict.**

After the 1940s, some analysts were sure they'd seen the last of nationalism. Decolonization became a preoccupation as the European powers retreated, but it was overshadowed by the ideological conflicts of the Cold War. Clashing principles, not clashing peoples, were the new source of global conflict.

Then the Cold War ended. Tensions between the political Left and Right that had stolen the stage for so long suddenly dissolved, Pillar says, revealing