

said this week, “then we’ll be running against a Congress that’s not doing anything for the American people, and the choice will be very stark and will be very clear.” In keeping with his post-partisan brand, the president is hitting the Congress as a whole rather than just House Republicans. But he does so knowing that the GOP has taken the bulk of the damage from anti-Congress sentiment.

And you can be sure that Obama will do everything he can to pin the toxic Congress on the GOP nominee. Which brings us back to the question of a GOP Sister Souljah moment. Can we expect Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, or Mitt Romney to publicly disassociate him or herself from the party’s toxic brand?

Take them one at a time. The embodiment of the no-compromise style the public disdains, Bachmann seems congenitally incapable of such a move unless it’s a reverse Sister Souljah moment, where she castigates her party for being insufficiently beholden to its base.

Then there is the newest contestant, Texas Gov. Rick Perry. While the last Lone Star governor to run for president couched his conservatism as compassion-

ate and cast himself as a “uniter, not a divider,” Perry has a history of being a rhetorical bomb-thrower who relishes a fight, and not someone given to apologize for taking hard lines. His lunatic comments about Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke’s efforts to stimulate the economy being potentially “treasonous” are classic Perry. He has shown some willingness to buck conservatives on immigration. But he seems an unlikely candidate for a stand against movement orthodoxy, especially because he seems to be positioning himself as the thorough-going, unwavering conservative in the race, in contrast to the abject flip-flopper Romney.

The former Massachusetts governor, ironically, seems perfectly capable of a Sister Souljah moment, but he is also ideally positioned for it to backfire. Clinton’s rebuke of Souljah was a logical step in a long-term effort to move his party to the center. Romney, by contrast, has spent most of the last decade trying to burnish his conservative bona fides. Publicly breaking with the right after securing the nomination would only reinforce his reputation as a transparently say-anything politician. |

Does the GOP need a “Sister Souljah” moment? Weigh in at letters@usnews.com

The Military Way

By Jessica Rettig



Rather than civilians and diplomats, the United States is increasingly being represented overseas by men and women in uniform. According to long-time foreign correspondent Stephen Glain, America has become an empirical power—and a militarized one at that. In his new book, *State vs. Defense: The Battle to Define America's Empire*, Glain, who is also a blogger for *U.S. News*, explains how the United States has put increasing emphasis on preserving its military presence in the world, putting American lives and its economic well-being in peril. He recently talked with *U.S. News* about how the United States shifted toward militarism and how difficult it would be to reverse course. Excerpts: **Was there a turning point where the country began to favor militarism over diplomacy?**

I interpret the inflection point as the Truman Doctrine. Militarists in the Truman administration took this and waved it about as a manifesto for a major U.S. offensive response to the “Soviet threat.” Now, fast forward to 1992, in the twilight of the George Herbert Walker Bush administration, and the Defense Department produced a document called the Defense Planning Guidance. This document makes it very specific that it is the policy of the United States to pre-empt any regional power that may compete with the United States for influence abroad.

The title of your book suggests a battle between the State Department and the Pentagon. Is it that polarized?

The title is really smart, but it tends to—as the publishing industry does—imply that it’s diplomats versus the military, and that’s not the case. Far from being the lead agency in

the militarization of the foreign policy, the Pentagon, by law, has to do what civilians tell it to do. And of the many personalities who I characterize as militarists, only two are from the military. The rest are all civilians. These are people who interpret the world as a dangerous place, and interpret the United States as being perennially surrounded by some kind of threat. That assumption is totally erroneous.

It seems like there's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy in the militaristic mind-set.

Yes. If you embrace as your policy control of what the Pentagon calls the global commons, which is an artful and euphemistic way of saying the world, then you're going to get bloody one way or another.

You say in the book that President George W. Bush should have acknowledged the September 11 attacks as "the tragic but incidental price of American foreign policy."

What did you mean by that?

[Bush] was being extremely disingenuous when he implied that the attacks were about our way of life. As he put it, it was about who we are, not what we do. All you have to do is Google "bin Laden fatwa" and you'll get the full text of his 1996 manifesto. [Bin Laden] makes it very clear that he is waging war against the United States for its support of Israel, for its deploy-

ment of 5,000 troops in Saudi Arabia, for its support of what he regards as apostate regimes. His grievances against the United States which provoked the attack were secular in nature, not religious. A statesmanlike response would have been for the president to say, "Yes, we were attacked for our policies, but these policies are just,

"I've also been saying that some kind of conflict with China is inevitable over the next several decades."

these are the policies of our country, and no attack of any kind will make us waver in support of them." So, acknowledge the motivation, acknowledge the costs, and then make the declaration that these are costs worth paying. Now, personally, I don't think they are worth the price.

Do you think that defense spending cuts will reverse this militaristic trend?

I hear a lot about cuts, but I don't hear much about the need to re-examine our commitments overseas. Until we start asking ourselves why we are spending an enormous amount of money maintaining huge military deployments on behalf of

Korea, Japan, and the European states which are the richest countries in the world, we're still going to be in the position of trying to keep something going that's unsustainable.

But if these deployments aren't sustainable, how will they go on?

They're sustainable for as long as the Pentagon insists they're necessary, against all evidence to the contrary. It's just going to be harder to maintain. So, it is sustainable at a very high cost and self-sacrifice.

Can the trend be reversed?

When you look at this military buildup that is going on in China, and the assets we already have in place, I don't see how you can reconcile any sort of demilitarization with something like that, even with the budget cuts. The likely scenario is that they're going to maintain the empire with lesser sources. They're going to have to take that out of the hide of our people in uniform and American taxpayers. I just see a bad situation getting worse. I hope I'm wrong. I've also been saying that some kind of conflict with China is inevitable over the next several decades, and I hope I'm wrong about that too. |

Is the United States too focused on the military? Weigh in at letters@usnews.com.



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Answers to Quiz

1. **B.** Benjamin Franklin
2. **D.** 171 billion pieces of mail
3. **C.** 1963
4. **A.** Clinton
5. **True.** Mules still bring mail, food, and other supplies to the people.
6. **C.** \$3.1 billion
7. **False.**
8. **B.** 61.3 square feet
9. **D.** Patrick R. Donahoe

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