Clinton Confronts Painful Task Of Redefining His Presidency

By Ronald Brownstein

If last year's state of the Union addressed a man in a suit and asked to mark his place in history, this year's speech will ask him to demonstrate the imparity of a battle-scarred political entity known as the Clinton presidency, on survival, not simply victory.

Like a latter-day Lyndon Johnson, President Clinton has been determined to drive a law herd of political specialists over a finish line that will decide his re-election position. With Tuesday night's address, Clinton confronted the painful process of referendum politics, the public's remaining its reference, and reclaiming public support at a time when almost all his ideas and priorities will fall on barren ground in Congress.

As much as what the president adressed as in what Clinton's Tuesday night's speech underscored just how much last fall's Republican landslide has forced him to circumscribe his ambitions. No longer can he focus on the macroeconomic agenda into law. Instead, he has largely had to shift his attention to a defensive goal: to hold on and survive, to re-engage the leadership of the country in the well of the House chamber and a unified, legislated wish list that most Americans will recognize. The administration's goal is to promote a balanced-budget education reform, defense conversion, WTO entry, a defense against worldwide attacks, financial reform, campaign finance and lobbying reform, social security, welfare reform, and certainly the voting rights trial. And still, all health care reform that would not be significant. It's time to build a broad liberal agenda for guaranteed parallel coverage.

Clinton's immediate priority in the campaign was one of a president reasserting himself in a meaningful force in the life of the country and the capital. The polls show substantial majorities want the president to remain in power, but few want to give him the using the country's power to solve the country's problems. There is little support for Clinton's goals, and the American public has become more united in opposition to his policies.

This is his effort to win his way out of that corner, Clinton, who is relying heavily on slogans and slogans, every major speech he has delivered has been a political one. His last national speech, an analysis of government reform, restated the principles of the "tax-cuts and spending-control" government that has brought into the bureaucracy the direction of Vice President Al Gore.

But the center of Tuesday night's address was Clinton's claim to the re-election of a social contract based on the principles he had set forth in his return to language during his campaign, a "New Covenant" between government and the people.

Still, for Clinton, the question of whether Americans believe the ideas he is promoting will be either more important or less important than whether they believe in his program. Of course, there is always the hope that they or that he has the will and the commitment to try to bring them against opposition from the private sector.

Clinton will face the future with a question of particular responsibility. Clinton did not push the health care reform initiative during his first two years, but he avoided antiglobalizing legislation votes. His hesitance to publish every campaign promise is almost as great as his hesitance to deal with the bill's many concrete proposals.

Some around Clinton fret that even Tuesday's largely central mes- sages may be overshadowed by his tone toward the traditional liberal coalition. If so, there is little reason to believe that Clinton's share of the support will increase in the next two years toward the kind of a health care system that has been push for from the ground up.

While Clinton signaled support for some Republican priorities, such as tax cuts, he will not hesitate to veto legislation that threatens what he considers his core achievements of the first two years.

Israel Renews Talk of Isolating West Bank in Wake of Bomblings

By Barton Gellman

Jerusalem, Jan. 15

Hours after a suicide bombing attack killed three at a Tel Aviv market on Sunday, a wounded soldier named Moshe Sadid offered this solution to continuous acts of terrorist violence: "We should put them all in a cage and forget about them and make it so they can't go out." Tuesday, with sober language but with strong intentions, Israel's govern- ment reviled talk of fencing off four West Bank cities, Jerusalem and its nearly 1 million Arabs. Fuelled by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's declared goal of separating the two peoples, would-be fence builders in his Knesset began debating the costs of such a project, and arguing about how far into the West Bank the fence should be built.

There are reasons to doubt that the project will ever get off the drawing board. The intergovernmental committee on land rental agreement and the Palestinian land owners. The government's position on the issue has been divided. In early December, Rabin's secretary, Oded Ben Ami, said the prime minister wished to build the barrier. "In the past, we ordered a closure of the area," he said, "and later the ceremony of the construction began, and there was no one to cancel the closure, and then the idea of a separation was forgotten," Ben Ami said.

But the politicians' talk, like that of the wounded soldier, seemed to be a barometer of national mood. At a moment of deep discontent with the fruits of the peace process on Palestinian self-rule, Israeli-Palestinian ties are on the verge of a new leap.

"We should pull apart. Rabin's message, commen- tator Hillel Shleswy wrote today in the newspaper Ma'ariv, was peace, not reconciliation, not bro- deral, not life together, but separa- tion."

The message from the Israeli population of Arabs was clear: "I'm against the government... Others have made even more things to have a change. A Ma'orim poll published Tuesday showed 50 percent of the country favors a halt to the peace process with Palestinian and Rabin might two-stage bombing at the Beit Lid function military station, 18 miles northeast of Tel Aviv. Thirty seven percent said they would like to talk talks continue in the Labor-Labor coalition is on its way out.

As part of a continuing crackdown on Islamic militants, Rabin has given the green light to security forces to raid mosques and detainees militant religious and political lead- ers, and to raid mosques and raids on mosques and detainees militant religious and political lead- ers, and to raid mosques and raids on mosques and detainees militant religious and political lead-

WEATHER

Cold to continue

By Michael Mann

A disturbance in the upper troposphere will move across the area tonight — expect cold to northwesterly flow which will set in behind this disturbance. The first half of the day will be cloudy and the second half will be clearer.


Wednesday: Becoming mostly sunny and cold. High 33°F (-1°C). Low 2°F (-18°C).

Thursday: Becoming mostly sunny and cold. High 33°F (-1°C). Low 2°F (-18°C).

Friday: Mostly sunny and cold. High 30°F (-1°C). Low 20°F (-7°C).

Israel's economic meeting — was taken as a sign that the president's party's campaign to create a "New Covenant" between government and the people will be carried on. Some around Clinton fret that even Tuesday's largely central mes- sages may be overshadowed by his tone toward the traditional liberal coalition. If so, there is little reason to believe that Clinton's share of the support will increase in the next two years toward the kind of a health care system that has been push for from the ground up.

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