

Nuclear arms freeze: The time is now

The Philadelphia Inquirer Op-ed

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By Rep. Edward J. Markey

Can the freeze be for real?

The nuclear weapons freeze movement in this country certainly is for real. But can we move beyond this public statement and actually have a freeze on the nuclear arms race followed by major reductions?

With the nuclear weapons freeze resolution soon to come up in the U.S. House of Representatives for a second vote (it lost on Aug. 5, 1982, by just two votes) and with its chance of passage much better this time (the Nov. 2 election put more freeze supporters in the House), that's a fair question to ask.

The freeze, like any arms control proposal, poses two important questions: Do we want a freeze now? And, if we do, can we implement it?

The first question can be answered in short order. Of course we want a freeze. In fact, now is the best time to freeze.

For one, public enthusiasm for such an arms control agreement is at an all-time high and this is extremely important. If any arms control enthusiast doubts the value of having the public behind an agreement, remember the lonely days of SALT II.

For another, the superpowers have never been more at nuclear parity than they are now. Under any nuclear war-fighting scenario, both sides have the capacity to reduce the other to rubble and limited war-fighting strategies notwithstanding, military experts agree that any nuclear war scenario most likely will end with all the silos emptied and both sides in rubble. That's what parity is all about. That's why the superpowers can stop today, confident that their deterrence will be maintained.

Both sides are nevertheless improving the nuclear war-fighting capabilities of their nuclear arms, that has resulted in unthinkable weapons of mass destruction having a more thinkable military utility in times of crisis or confrontation.

What's more, miniaturization is producing smaller nuclear weapons, such as ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles, that are more easily hidden and thus more difficult to count. Deploying these weapons will complicate verification, making future arms control agreements even more difficult to conclude.

So not only is now the best time to freeze, it may be our last.

Can we implement a freeze? Of course we can. The question we should be asking now is not "Can we freeze?" but "What is the best way to freeze?"

The freeze resolution before Congress calls for a mutual and verifiable freeze on the production, testing and deployment of nuclear warheads, missiles and other de-

livery systems, followed by major reductions in both sides' arsenals.

Verification is a major factor in implementing this resolution. Critics claim it's the major hangup.

But an examination of (1) the weapons to be covered by a freeze, (2) the verification capabilities the United States has in place or could easily put in place, and (3) the level of monitoring confidence needed to detect militarily significant violations of a treaty, reveals that verifying a freeze does not pose the technological hurdles critics claim.

Already the United States has the national technical means of verification (spy satellites, listening posts and radar) which have been established as a result of the SALT negotiations and which can verify the testing and deployment of strategic nuclear missiles and other delivery systems, such as bombers.

The United States can also verify Soviet deployment and testing of intermediate-range missiles and delivery systems. The Reagan administration demonstrated this capability—inadvertently, no doubt—by publicizing every time the Soviets put an SS-20 into place.

Tactical nuclear missiles and delivery vehicles, because they often can be used in conventional roles, are not as easy to verify as strategic and theater systems. But verification of tactical weapons is certainly feasible.

The United States, for example, monitors closely all Soviet land and sea forces; intelligence officials know which forces actually have nuclear missions because of the special training and equipment those forces require.

As for nuclear warheads, their deployment on strategic systems is being verified largely through SALT-established verification of the delivery vehicles that carry them. And through seismological monitoring systems already in place or agreed to by both sides in the nearly concluded Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations, the United States could confidently detect Soviet testing of nuclear warheads.

The production of strategic missiles, bombers and submarines is easy to monitor simply because the systems are too large to hide from our satellites.

That leaves production of nuclear warheads. While the warheads may be easy to hide, a significant quantity of the fissionable material put in them isn't.

Production of weapons-grade nuclear material is a complex process requiring a number of large and highly visible facilities, such as enrichment plants and plu-

tonium production reactors.

The Soviets could probably get away with producing a few bombs undetected but that would add little to their current stockpile of about 25,000 warheads.

For the clandestine warhead production to pose any significant military threat to the United States, the Soviets would need to produce thousands more bombs—and that production would eventually stick out like a sore thumb.

Yes, there are other details to flesh out in implementing a freeze. For example, which of many worthy negotiating strategies should be pursued in achieving a freeze?

Should we, as some arms control analysts have suggested, look for a quick agreement on what can easily be frozen—such as testing and deployment of missiles and bombers—then use this as a confidence-building measure to negotiate a more comprehensive freeze and reductions?

Should we pursue a quick freeze by shrinking SALT limits we already have on strategic systems and by closing SALT's loopholes, then negotiate a more comprehensive agreement?

Or, should we attempt to reach immediately an informal, across-the-board freeze with the Soviet Union on deploying new nuclear weapons—a sort of negotiator's pause—so those aspects of the arms race that pose the most immediate danger can be held in check while a freeze and reductions treaty is hammered out?

There are a number of options.

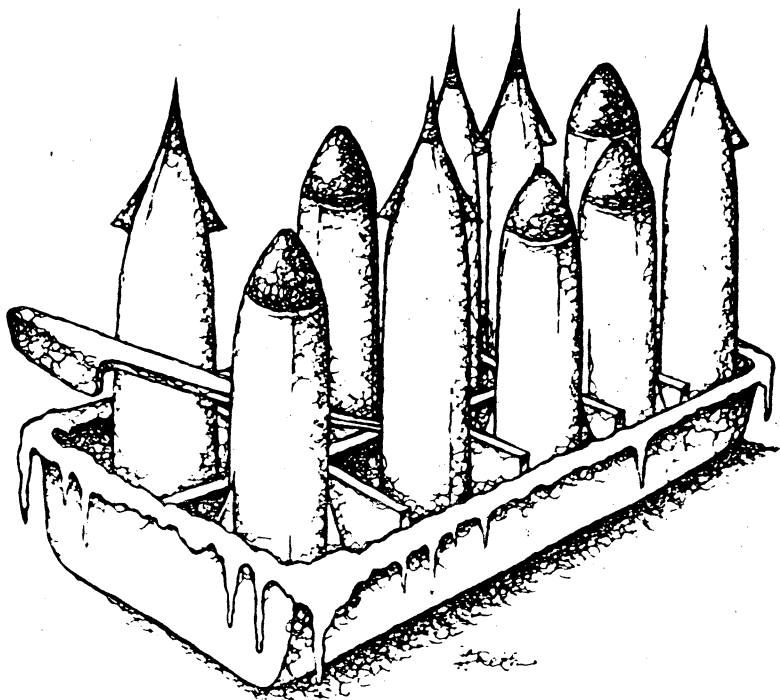
My point is that in implementing a freeze, the opportunities for reaching an agreement far outweigh the technical problems.

Remember, there were those who once thought that freezing the testing of warheads above ground and freezing the deployment of anti-ballistic missiles were nice ideas but too difficult to achieve. The public, however, protested and demonstrated and demanded that we have those treaties, so the Limited Test Ban and ABM treaties were concluded.

Today the public is protesting and demonstrating and demanding a freeze on the nuclear arms race. Let's not squander this opportunity by getting hung up on technicalities that turn out to be merely excuses for not freezing.

The only missing ingredient for achieving a freeze now is political will.

(Rep. Edward J. Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, is the House sponsor of the Nuclear Weapons Freeze and Reductions Resolution. He is also author of the book *Nuclear Peril: The Politics of Proliferation*, published by Ballinger Publishing Company.)



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March 3, 1983

Dear Friend:

By mid-March, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to take an historic step by voting on a resolution calling on the president to begin negotiations with the Soviet Union for a mutual and verifiable freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons. Last year, this identical resolution lost in the House by two votes.

As sponsor of the freeze in the House, I am optimistic that it will pass this year. I am also encouraged by the effect this issue has had on my colleagues in Congress.

Millions of Americans have already indicated their strong support for a nuclear weapons freeze and for an end to the arms race. I believe Congress is ready to respond to their call. The freeze movement is still growing and it will continue to grow even after Congress acts on the resolution now before it.

I have take the liberty of enclosing an editorial I recently wrote for the Philadelphia Inquirer. I hope you will take the time to read it. I also would be very interested to hear any views you may have about this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



EDWARD J. MARKEY
Member of Congress

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Comm. from Congressman Edward J. Markey Re:
a resolution pending before Congress Re: a
mutual and verifiable freeze on the testing,
production and deployment of nuclear weapons
by the U.S. and Soviet Union.

In City Council,

March 14, 1983

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