

Treaty, banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water, and in outer space. But new crises quickly erupted, and the relaxation of tension achieved during these periods of incipient detente was rapidly dissipated.

There are two main reasons for this disparity between Khrushchev's sweeping aspirations and his limited achievements. The first relates to his political personality, and the second is linked with the ambitious nature of his foreign policy goals. Khrushchev was temperamentally unsuited to the patient pursuit of a step-by-step improvement in superpower relations. He was impulsive, mercurial and head-strong. He ignored the advice of experts, did not appreciate how his actions would be viewed by the West, and overestimated what he could achieve by bluster and threats. He lacked the patience and finesse that were needed to begin the long process of slowly defusing the antagonisms, mistrust, and conflicts that had accumulated between East and West over many decades.

An even more fundamental problem was Khrushchev's fixation on two conflicting objectives. He never sorted out his priorities and failed to realize the fundamental incompatibility between his goals. On the one hand, he genuinely wanted to achieve a major improvement in Soviet-American relations. Downplaying class differences, he saw the Soviet Union and the United States as the world's only superpowers who, by virtue of this fact, had a responsibility to jointly manage the affairs of the world. While many in the West failed to appreciate the importance of this element in his thought, the Chinese leadership quickly grasped it. They feared that the emergence of a Soviet-American partnership to police the world would cause Moscow to neglect the interests of its socialist allies. This was a major reason why in 1960 they launched their vigorous assault against his ideological innovations. When Khrushchev refused to back down, this led to the eruption of the most serious ideological schism in the history of the international communist movement. But this was a price that Khrushchev was willing to pay. He wanted a detente and the establishment of a new, more co-operative, Soviet-American partnership.