

Assurance was to be made doubly sure by the voting procedure provided in Rules of Procedure suggested by the Big Four by which questions of procedure should be decided by majority vote, but decisions on all other questions and recommendations should be decided by a two-thirds majority. A two-thirds majority on any question of substance was obtainable only by the Western Powers, and for them only if the proposal did not affect an agreed clause, and was supported by at least two of the Great Powers. This became clear during the final voting sessions of the Plenary Conference. Almost all the proposals of substance which were approved by a simple or two-thirds majority concerned clauses on which the Foreign Ministers had not reached agreement and where the alternative drafts of individual members of the Council of Foreign Ministers had been presented to the Conference. In these cases the U.K. or the U.S.A. proposal was accepted, while that of the U.S.S.R. secured only the usual 6 or 7 votes.

Some of the smaller "Western" powers had independent proposals to advance which ran counter to the agreed clauses. They saw that even under a simple majority rule these proposals would have little chance of acceptance, but under a two-thirds majority they would have none. It was the attempt of some of these seventeen non-Big-Four Powers to secure a simple rather than a two-thirds majority that precipitated the first procedural battle. (The "Eastern" smaller powers also had independent proposals, but no system of voting except "unanimity" could carry these against opposition.)

After two weeks of strained tempers and recriminations a compromise was reached under which the Council of Foreign Ministers agreed to "consider" two types of recommendations—those adopted by a majority of two-thirds, and those adopted by a simple majority. It was implied that the former would have more weight than the latter. This victory, won at the price of some embitterment among the Allies gathered together to write the peace (made possible by their co-operation in the war), was a victory within a restricted battleground, because it still gave the Conference no power of decision, and it did not alter the fact that at the very minimum nine votes would be opposed in the Plenary Conference, the Military Commission, and the Legal and Drafting Commission to any proposal to recommend a change to any agreed clause of the draft treaties (and eleven opposing votes would prevent a simple majority); in the Political and the Economic Commissions for Italy, where ten contrary votes would prevent a simple majority, the same minimum of nine contrary votes was assured in advance; in the Roumanian and Finnish Commissions the six votes necessary to prevent a simple majority were already guaranteed, as was also the case in the Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Balkans Economic Commissions, where eight certain contrary votes met the negative requirement of seven in the first and eight in the last two.