

However, example. 2.
the eu will now have



However, the EU constitution does extend centralisation. There will be more joint action to be decided by majority voting, in immigration and asylum policy, for example. But in other areas, member states can still go their own way, in defence and foreign policy and tax, for example. 2. The EU will now have a president and a foreign minister in addition to its parliament, supreme court, civil service, flag and anthem. Is not, there, a state? No, though some say it sounds like one. These institutions have limited powers and some sound grandeur than they are. Take the “ president”, for example.

The EU, in fact, already has three “ presidents” of the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the European Parliament. What is new is that the Council Presidency, a post currently held by one member state for six months, will become a permanent position. But the powers of the president will be limited. He or she will be an EU spokesman but will not have executive powers like those of the US or French presidents. 3.

Does a Foreign Minister mean a common foreign policy? Not necessarily. It is true that the constitution does call for a common foreign policy and for all members to support it. However, the process of reaching such a policy is complex and each member state has the right to opt out. This was one of the British “ red lines” in the negotiations.

Each country, therefore, can have its own foreign policy, as happened over Iraq. There is already a “ high representative” for foreign policy and although the new post will be bigger in that it will bring in the role of the external affairs commissioner, the foreign minister will be able to speak for the EU

only to the extent that there is an agreed policy. He or she will not be able to make policy.

4. Does the constitution mean that this is a Europe of nation states? No. despite claims that this enshrines the rights of the nation states.

If that were wholly so, the EU would simply be a free trade agreement like the North American Free Trade Agreement between the US, Canada and Mexico. The constitution confirms that the EU is a halfway house. It has preserved some nation state rights but it/ confirms that the states have given up some of their rights – over the internal market, foreign trade, agriculture, fisheries and the environment, for example. So they are not entirely sovereign, by choice. If they want to be entirely sovereign, they can leave the Union.

5. How much does the constitution really change things? It will certainly lead to more qualified majority voting, within the basic framework of Council, Commission and Parliament. It also would have those states who want to get closer together to do so, as most have done over the single currency, the euro.

Its opponents say that it goes too far towards more collective action and that member states will be further swamped by the centre, eventually forcing those who opt out in various policies to join in. Its supporters say that it preserves a balance and there is a third group which says that it does not go far enough. 6. The constitution says that its law is supreme. Will the EU impose its law? The procedures by which laws are passed have not fundamentally changed. Laws will still be proposed by the executive body,

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the Commission, and agreed jointly by member states in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. EU law is supreme in those areas where it has the right to legislate, but that has always been the case.

If the procedure allows for a majority vote, it is possible likely even; that a member state will be outvoted and in that case the EU law will be imposed on it. That already happens. The constitution means that it might happen more often. 7. Will the Charter of Fundamental Rights interfere with national laws? The Charter sets out a list of rights from the right to life to the right to strike. The UK government was worried that it might affect national industrial relations laws and says that it will not do so, but the Charter has yet to be tested in the courts.

8. This won't be the end of EU agreements, though? No, it won't. There will always be tension between those who want to go further and those who want to hold back. Some supporters of a deferral Europe and union might forge ahead in some new areas like tax harmonisation and social security, as they have done with the single currency, the euro. The show goes on.