6. The House of Lords

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This chapter examines whether the House of Lords plays an effective anti-majoritarian legislative role. The variations on the theme of reforming the powers and composition of the House of Lords qua legislative body are legion, as are the pros and cons of each scheme proposed, but most reform plans present a paradox. The more we ask a second chamber to perform functions complementary to those of the Commons, the more we demand of its members that they be (as individuals and as a body) ‘expert’, ‘experienced’, and ‘nonpartisan’, and so the more we reveal the crushing dominance of party politics in the lower house, and the incapacity and/or unwillingness of backbench MPs to exert a restraining influence on government activities. This suggests that the key division within the legislative process is now not Lords versus Commons, nor Labour versus Conservative, but party versus national interest.
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