In Britain, similarly, the governing party has historically dominated law-making. As Moran (2011, p. 157) points out:

The House of Commons is misunderstood if viewed as a legislator. Virtually all legislative proposals originate from, and are shaped by, the executive. Nor are the Commons’ extensive debates on legislative proposals of great significance in shaping the law: secure government majorities (which up to now have been the usual state of affairs) mean that legislative proposals are hardly ever overturned wholesale, and detailed amendments are usually the result of concessions by ministers.

In the party-dominated parliaments of Britain and some of its ex-colonies, the legislative function is reduced to quality control: patching up errors in bills prepared in haste by ministers and civil servants. In legislation, at least, these assemblies are reactive.

By contrast, committee-based parliaments in continental Europe do play a more positive role in law-making. Coalition governments, influential committees, and an elite commitment to compromise combine to deliver laws acceptable to all sides.

But it is in presidential systems, including the United States, that the assembly achieves the greatest autonomy in law-making. The separation of powers and personnel inherent in a presidential regime limits executive influence over the legislature. This institutional separation is often reinforced by divided government. That is, the party in the White House may lack a majority in at least one chamber of Congress, further reducing the legislature’s willingness to convert the administration’s proposals into laws.

Yet, even in presidential systems the initiative in framing bills usually lies with the executive. Certainly, in the American Congress only members of the House of Representatives can formally introduce bills. But the executive can easily find a friendly representative to initiate a bill on its behalf. The political reality is that bills are developed by the administration and then transformed in Congress – if they do not expire in its maze of committees. ‘You supply the bills and we work them over’, one member of Congress reportedly said to an administration official. The executive proposes, as in most