trouble provided I give him money for his navy. If he keeps quiet he is worth a million or two.' On 9 December 1916, another letter to William (expecting it would be read by his revered uncle Richard Lloyd) announced that he had 'presided over my first War Cabinet. Found it embarrassing to be addressed as "Prime Minister" by all the members … Love to all. Thank Anita for her very sweet letter. Tell Uncle Lloyd that he is responsible for putting me in this awful job.' And in 1924, writing to his daughter Megan (on a tour of India), he observed that: 'What changes are taking place. A Socialist Govt. actually in power. But don't get uneasy about your investments or your antiques … They are all engaged in looking as respectable as lather & blather will make them. They are out to soothe ruffled nerves … Ramsay is just a fussy Baldwin & no more.'

The archives contain letters to Lloyd George, as well as many from him. Two from Margot Asquith are of particular interest, given Lloyd George's replacement of her husband as Prime Minister in December 1916. In May 1914, commenting on C. F. G. Masterman, the proposed Liberal candidate in the Swansea by-election, she wrote: 'I've always had the same view of Masterman. With all his brains, he is *au fond* complacent, smug & soft as margarine … It wants a man of genius to prevent us being swept in the next Gen. Election & that man is to be sweet tempered, sunny, tactful & a man who understands men & *likes the job.* It is *you*.' And in May 1915, after the political crisis that forced the first coalition with the Unionists: 'I said years ago to Henry, I like Winston, but he is the man who will do for yr. Cabinet, he or Ll. George if he doesn't get fond of you.'

All this is simply a taster for the wealth of material available in the archives themselves, some of which, as Jones observes, have been very little used by historians. This book is an invaluable guide to those sources, and for serious students of Lloyd George, it will be required reading.

Duncan Brack is Editor of the Journal of Liberal Democrat History.

What might have been

Phillip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin (ed.): *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical Methodological and Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1996)

Reviewed by **Andrew Hudson**

Counterfactual thought offers a method of evaluating the causes and consequences of historical events by considering how they might have had a different outcome had some of the antecedent events been different. This collection of essays considers the ground rules for constructing such 'counterfactuals', their application to case studies and classes of event, the use of computers and game theory, and other related factors.

Tetlock and Belkin describe what they consider to be the rules for constructing plausible counterfactuals in the opening chapter. Six criteria are suggested – clarity, logical consistency, historical consistency, theoretical consistency, statistical consistency and projectability. Their rules on consistency largely concern the relationship between antecedent and consequent, while the concept of projectability examines whether the implications are consistent with observations in the real world.

In the second essay James Fearon considers the use of counterfactuals in the social sciences, covering issues such as the 'butterfly effect' whereby a minor event results in a major outcome, and deterministic arguments whereby individual events are dampened down by long-term trends. Fearon also queries the legitimacy of some types of antecedent, including the much-quoted 'if Napoleon had had a stealth bomber' which is generally regarded as implausible. He also adds a criterion of proximity between the antecedent and consequent when judging the plausibility of a counterfactual.

Subsequent chapters include studies of individual events such as Munich and the Cuban missile crisis, classes of event including wars and revolutions, and the use of computer simulations and game theory. A final section deals with other factors including blending, causality, statistical inferences and psychological bias, including the tendency to see deterministic outcomes through hindsight.

The book demonstrates why counterfactuals tend to concentrate in detail on antecedents rather than consequent events, as can be seen in Niall Fergusson's *Virtual History.* Fictional equivalents, or 'alternate world' stories, as they are called by science fiction enthusiasts, are more entertaining, including books such as Keith Roberts' *Pavane* or Robert Harris' *Fatherland*. But counterfactuals are not intended for entertainment – they represent a serious study, concerned with the evaluation of historical events and the derivation of conclusions from them.

The essays are largely written by social scientists, with the bulk of the contributors being political scientists. The text is heavy going in places. The section covering computer simulations and game theory contains a considerable amount of mathematics, but this is not essential to understanding the principles.

The first two chapters, in particular, by Tetlock and Belkin, and James Fearon, are useful in providing a methodology that could be applied to the study of Liberal history. The techniques that the book suggests could also be used by council groups to consider the potential outcomes of policy options.

Andrew Hudson is a member of the Liberal Democrat History Group and of the Association of Liberal Democrat Trade Unionists.