

Prologue

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**WHAT IF?:
THE HISTORIAN'S
FAVORITE
SECRET QUESTION**

Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago. For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods, and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet, it hasn't even begun yet, it not only hasn't begun yet but there is still time for it not to begin . . . yet it's going to begin, we all know that, we have come too far with too much at stake that moment doesn't need even a fourteen year old boy to think This time. Maybe This time with all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself to crown with desperate and unbeliev-

able victory the desperate gamble, the cast made two years ago. . . .

[T]omorrow night is nothing but one long sleepless wrestle with yesterday's omissions and regrets.

—William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust*

LIKE SO MANY OF his Southern brethren, William Faulkner distilled the outcome of the American Civil War down to those few moments at Gettysburg when the Confederate troops under George Pickett were about to launch the final assault of the battle. Pickett's charge was indeed a "desperate gamble." Lee knew it; Longstreet knew it; Pickett knew it; Pickett's men knew it. But they realized that the Army of Northern Virginia had come too far to turn back at that point. So, against all odds, Lee and his lieutenants rolled the dice in the hope they might somehow gain an "unbelievable victory." Lady Luck, who had smiled so often in the past, failed them that day. Pickett's men were thrown back in disarray, and Lee's grand invasion of the North ended with an ignominious retreat back across the Potomac. The battle was lost, and with that loss went the South's last hope of winning the war. Generations of Southerners were left to wrestle with the "omissions and regrets" of that fateful day in July and wonder what might have been if the flags had remained furled and Pickett's charge never been made. Could the Army of Northern Virginia have avoided the disaster that befell it on the third day of Gettysburg? Could it have avoided defeat and perhaps even have finally gained the larger prize it sought when it had gambled on war two years earlier?

These questions have been posed by historians many times, yet few of them have bothered to pursue the issue in any depth. Given the general aversion of historians to counterfactual history, this is hardly surprising. "If they have considered counterfactuals at all," observes Geoffrey Hawthorn, "[historians] have done so only nervously, in

asides.”¹ In the pages that follow, I propose to move counterfactual history out of the realm of shadowy asides and place it at the center of my historical analysis. I shall examine a series of counterfactual questions dealing with the consequences of something that did not happen: a Southern victory in the American Civil War. My principal aim in this fanciful exercise goes beyond idle speculation; I hope to demonstrate that the Civil War was not only a watershed in American history but also a crucial turning point in the history of the Western world. The North’s military triumph ensured that the United States would remain unified and eventually grow to be one of the dominant economic and political powers in the world. But suppose not only that the South had won the war but that there was a *Confederate States of America* alongside the *United States of America* at the end of the nineteenth century. Only by carefully considering the long-term consequences of having two rival nations competing for political and economic dominance can we fully appreciate the significance of a war that threatened to dismember the largest nation in the Americas.

There is a further reward to this exercise. In the process of explaining the importance of the war to world history, we shall also shed light upon the ongoing debates within the United States regarding the causes of the Civil War. That conflict was a bitter dispute between two sections of the country that had “conflicting visions” regarding the future of the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. On one side was a Southern vision of an agrarian slave society that would continue to expand throughout the Western Hemisphere. On the other side was a Northern view of the world shaped by the emerging ideology of individualism and a free market society. By the middle of the century a growing number of Americans were convinced that these two visions could no longer be reconciled within a single political entity. The result was the largest military conflict in the Western Hemisphere, a war that took almost as many lives as all the military actions of the United States through the end of the twentieth century. A counterfactual analysis of that war and its consequences will illus-

trate why this irresistible conflict could not have been avoided and emphasize how close the Southern Rebels came to creating a very different world.

Before we take up these issues, it will be useful to explore what we mean by counterfactual history. Historians tend to be of two minds on the worth of taking a counterfactual approach to examining the past. On the one hand are those, such as the eminent British historian E. H. Carr, who insist that “history is a record of what people did, not what they failed to do.” To this set of scholars, counterfactual analysis is little more than playing “a parlour game with the might-have-beens of history.”² Arguing over possible alternatives available at some particular time is, according to Carr, a pointless exercise, inasmuch as those options have been “closed by the *fait accompli*.”³ Carr’s view of the value of counterfactual history may represent a majority position within the historical profession, but there are notable dissenters. Hugh Trevor-Roper, for example, objects to this summary dismissal of historical alternatives simply because they were never realized. “History,” he insists, “is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened.”⁴ The “might-have-beens” of history are not simply idle conjectures; they are an essential part of the historical narrative.

While counterfactual history may not have been eagerly embraced by historians, even a casual glance at historical literature reveals that virtually every historian flirts with counterfactual possibilities at one time or another. Robert Cowley, one of the leading practitioners of counterfactual military history, observes: “It has been said, that ‘what if’ (or the counterfactual, to use the vogue word in academic circles) is the historian’s favorite secret question. What ifs . . . can reveal, in startling detail the essential stakes of a confrontation, as well as its potentially abiding consequences.”⁵ While the reason for asking what if questions is obvious enough, so is the challenge confronting those who would pursue counterfactual analysis. For any historical event there is not one but an infinite set of counterfactual events that could have

happened. No one seriously argues that historians should track down *all* these potential outcomes. But how do we constrain the number of counterfactual options in order to make the analysis not only more manageable but insightful to the exploration of a specific historical issue? This, it seems to me, is the question at the root of the debates over the usefulness of counterfactual history.

It is important to emphasize at the outset that a counterfactual may not be a useful tool for analyzing or describing some historical situations. Phenomena or narratives that stretch across many years and many places may not offer the historian a manageable set of possible events to examine. It is difficult, for example, to identify a single invention or idea that by itself substantially altered the course of the Industrial Revolution. Nor is it obvious that a single voyage of discovery was so important that its omission would have forestalled the exploration of the New World. This is not to say that inventions or voyages of discovery are unimportant. The problem is that there are so many possible outcomes that it is difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a single set of counterfactual events with which to construct a picture of what might have happened that would be useful for historical analysis. Counterfactual analysis *can* be of considerable assistance, however, in elucidating situations in which a few events in a reasonably short time have had a decisive impact on the course of history. Wars are among the very best examples of this kind of situation. The critical impact of warfare is acknowledged by historians of virtually every methodological persuasion, most of whom chronicle the “eras” of history by the outcome of major wars. This practice is more than a matter of chronological convenience; it reflects a belief that the outcomes of wars play a major role in shaping the course of history.

The fact that they are significant historical events is only one reason that wars are popular subjects for counterfactual speculations. Warfare also invites the consideration of alternative outcomes because it presents the historian with a relatively short window of analysis and a limited number of counterfactual outcomes that must be considered.

When all is said and done, most battles are decided on the battlefield. This means there are only three outcomes that can result from a military campaign or battle: One or the other of the two sides may be victorious by driving its foe off the field of battle, or the battle may end in a situation in which both sides back off for the time being, the fighting to be resumed in a subsequent campaign of battles. This means that the military historian can focus his or her attention on the answer to a single counterfactual question: What if the other side won? What makes this hypothetical question so intriguing is the element of unpredictability that is inherent in military conflict. "War," writes the German military historian Carl von Clausewitz, "is the realm of chance. No other human activity gives it greater scope: no other has such incessant and varied dealings with this intruder."⁶ For Clausewitz, whose treatise *On War* remains one of the most insightful studies of the causes and nature of military conflict, "there is an interplay of possibilities, probabilities, good luck and bad that weaves its way throughout the length and breadth of the tapestry. In the whole range of human activities, war most closely resembles a game of cards."⁷ Though *On War* was first published in 1832, subsequent history has not diminished the force of these insights into war and chance. Time and again victory or defeat has been the result of good luck as much as of the skill of generals or the courage of the troops that fought in the battle.

While the outcome of battles is unpredictable, in most cases this unpredictability comes down to a few significant events that determine the eventual outcome of the battle. The military historian constructing a counterfactual scenario needs only to identify the turning point in the battle and then imagine what might have happened in the fighting had this turning point gone the other way. William Faulkner's account of a pivotal moment at the Battle of Gettysburg is a case in point. Had Lee not launched the desperate charge on the third day, or had Pickett's charge by some stroke of luck broken the Union line and resulted in a Confederate victory, the Gettysburg campaign might

have ended quite differently from the version schoolchildren have etched in their memories. That in turn might have changed the course of the war. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 2, there were several turning points at Gettysburg that could have changed the course of that battle, and the same could be said for many other battles in the American Civil War. Over the years writers have argued that there were turning points that could have changed the outcome of almost any famous battle, from ancient times to the present. What makes these counterfactual speculations of interest to historians is the realization that a set of relatively innocuous departures from what actually happened on the battlefield could have accumulated into significant shifts in the course of history for a nation—or indeed for the entire world.

DESPITE ITS usefulness for the exposition of their subject, most military historians seldom offer more than a few sweeping remarks that suggest how a different outcome to a battle might have changed the outcome of a war. These forays into what-might-have-been situations usually consist of brief essays that deal with particular events and battles.⁸ An exception to this rule is a group of historians who have applied themselves to what they call alternative outcomes of military history. In numerous articles and books these writers search for serious answers to the question of how battles and wars might have turned out differently. In the care they take to present detailed narratives of their counterfactual military scenarios, these scholars stand apart from a host of earlier what if writers. The practitioners of this “new” alternate history treat their subject as if they were dealing with real, not imaginary, events in the past. Writing about a counterfactual Battle of Gettysburg, historian Peter Tsouras insists that “alternate history has to be entirely within the bounds of the genuinely possible, and therefore accurate in all technical details.”⁹ Another writer claims that this genre of history “is not fiction, but simulated fact. We don’t just ask ‘what if things had been different?’ we actually put the question to the

test, make it happen, stand back and watch the results.”¹⁰ These writers become so engrossed in their alternative worlds that they no longer feel a need to deal with the real world. “There is no attempt to compare the ‘alternative’ with the ‘real,’ ” writes David Downing in his World War II account of the German invasion of Russia in 1942; “the alternative is written as if it really happened, in the manner of a bare-faced lie 80,000 words long.”¹¹ The “*raison d’être* for writing histories of this sort, lies in the fresh light it throws on the underlying processes of real history by its shifting of the more familiar events taking place on the surface.”¹²

The studies by alternative military history scholars emphasize Clausewitz’s point that the outcomes of battles and wars are inherently unpredictable. However, offering plausible alternative scenarios for military conflicts is only the first step in examining the impact of wars on history. As we noted earlier, wars offer one of the few instances in which discrete historical events can significantly alter the course of history in a very short time. The alternative histories discussed above present counterfactual outcomes that provide important insights into what Cowley called the “essential stakes” and “abiding consequences” of alternative military outcomes, and in this regard, the attention to detail and the careful scholarship of alternative military history lift their analysis far above the level of a parlor game. But how do we venture beyond the confines of counterfactual battlefields to explore the social or economic consequences of an important military outcome? Indeed, one must ask if there will be any major consequences at all. In an essay exploring the possibility that the Spanish Armada might have defeated the English fleet in 1588, Geoffrey Parker raises the possibility that what he calls “second order counterfactuals” could offset the effects of a military victory and produce a situation in which “the previous pattern may reassert itself.”¹³ Parker employs this concept to point out that in the case of the Spanish invasion of England, there is good reason to expect that Philip II might not have been able to exploit the opportunity that a Spanish victory at sea might have

offered for the conquest of England. Even if they had failed to defeat the Armada, the English might still have defeated the Spanish attempt to invade their island.

Professor Parker's idea of a second order counterfactual emphasizes the need always to view our counterfactual analysis in the context of larger historical forces that must shape any counterfactual scenario. What I shall call the historical mold allows us to extend our counterfactual story beyond the immediate consequences of an event. The possibility of a victory by the Axis Powers in the Second World War offers an excellent example of what we mean. David Downing presents a military scenario whereby the German *Blitzkrieg* has captured Moscow and most of European Russia by the end of 1942. German forces also drive the British from the Mediterranean islands of Crete and Malta and advance past Egypt into Palestine. But in the end these advances by the Nazis prove to be hollow victories. "*Blitzkrieg*," writes Downing, "was never more than a stopgap answer to the military problems of continental war. It could only work over a limited period of time; it could only be sustained, as was now obvious, over a limited area of space."¹⁴ Wade Dudley reaches a similar conclusion when he claims: "It is difficult to imagine any simple circumstances that would have allowed Japan to win any form of victory in World War II."¹⁵

Both these historians are placing their alternative history scenarios of Axis military victories in 1941–43 into a historical mold that suggests the victors will ultimately not be able to transform military success into long-term economic or political domination. What is significant to note from these examples is that although the outcomes of military battles may be unpredictable, the historical factors that determine long-run success or failure in major conflicts may not be so susceptible to chance. As Downing notes with regard to the long-run prospects of Nazi Germany, "economic realities cannot be indefinitely denied. Such a society lives on its expansionism, on consuming the lands, the work and the lives of others. It lives on its own momentum, until the momentum dies, and then it begins to consume itself. Such a

society has nowhere else to go.”¹⁶ This historical mold therefore must take a broader perspective that goes beyond the sphere of military affairs and delves into economic and social trends. What began as an exploration of military turning points will evolve into a broader analysis of subsequent turning points.

WRITERS OF alternative military history have developed a methodology that asks counterfactual questions with an imaginative approach, but they remain focused on a very narrow set of issues dealing with the outcome of battles or wars. Where can we find historical molds into which our counterfactual scenarios might be placed? One area is the work of cliometricians, scholars trained in economics who use statistical inference and economic theory to address problems in economic history.¹⁷ What I have termed a historical mold economists would call an economic or a historical model. At the core of cliometrics are the models that are employed to interpret evidence to support various historical interpretations. Our interest in cliometric research is in the way in which these models can be used to develop the wider implications of something as dramatic as a Southern victory in the Civil War.

Cliometricians have not been particularly interested in the details of war itself. They are, however, very interested in the impact that wars have on the economic development of the combatants. In the early 1960s a group of scholars turned their attention to a major question in American history: Did the Civil War accelerate economic growth and open the way for industrial growth after 1865? At the time most historians endorsed the view of Charles and Mary Beard, two well-known historians who argued in 1927 that the Civil War was nothing less than a “Second American Revolution.”¹⁸ For the Beards, the crisis facing the United States in 1860 was a clash of two very different societies, and resolving that conflict was an essential step in the evolution of the United States. In the early 1960s a number of scholars chal-

lenged the Beardian interpretation of the war by showing that economic growth actually *slowed* during the decade of the war.¹⁹ This interpretation carried with it a powerful counterfactual implication: *Had the war not taken place*, the rate of growth in the American economy of the 1860s would have been significantly higher than the rate of growth that we actually observe for that decade. By the end of the 1970s the accepted wisdom on the question of economic growth and the Civil War was that the war had probably *not* accelerated growth.²⁰ Counterfactual methodology had been responsible for a major reinterpretation of American history.

This was not the only area in which research undertaken by cliometricians had a profound effect on the historiography of the antebellum United States. Another major debate among historians was whether or not slavery was profitable to planters in the antebellum South. The accepted wisdom of historians before 1960 was that slavery was *not* profitable. A major problem with this interpretation was that it undermined the equally widespread view that slavery was the cause of the Civil War. If slavery were not profitable, why would the South fight a war to preserve it? In 1958 Alfred Conrad and John Meyer published an article that convincingly demonstrated that slavery *was* profitable to Southern planters.²¹ Their conclusion had profound implications on the historians' debates over the causes of the Civil War. "It seems doubtful," Conrad and Meyer said, "that the South was forced by bad statesmanship into an unnecessary war to protect a system which must soon have disappeared because it was economically unsound. This is a romantic hypothesis that will not stand against the facts."²² Once again, counterfactual methodology had provided insights that led to reassessments in historical interpretations. Quantitative research had shown that the historians' implicit counterfactual—that without the Civil War slavery would have died out of its own accord—was not supported by the data on the rates of return on slaves.²³

Cliometricians bring a strong sense of order to the counterfactual debates, but all too often they then become locked into an analytical

straitjacket that limits the scope of their analysis. In a sense, they become too preoccupied with “predicting” the past with ever-greater precision rather than with developing a historical analysis of what might have happened. The most ambitious attempts to construct sweeping narratives of a world in which the South won the Civil War have been undertaken not by historians or cliometricians but by novelists who develop fictional plots that are set in counterfactual worlds where the South wins the Civil War. These novels, a genre of literature that I term alternative historical fiction, intersperse real characters and major events with fictional characters and events that form the basis for the plot. An example of alternative historical fiction that develops a detailed narrative of a world with an independent Confederacy is the series of novels of Harry Turtledove. Turtledove develops a fascinating and eminently plausible scenario whereby a Confederate victory eventually leads to the involvement of both the United States and the Confederacy in a worldwide war early in the twentieth century.²⁴ While writers of alternative historical fiction offer insights into the world that would have existed had the Confederacy won, they necessarily subordinate their historical analyses to the interactions of the fictional characters in the novels that form their plots. Like the historians who avoid exploring counterfactual questions in any depth, the novelists writing alternative historical fiction avoid dealing with the myriad of historical details that arise from their choices of counterfactual worlds. They simply present the counterfactual events as backgrounds to the plots rather than the focus of historical inquiry.²⁵

WE HAVE looked at the different approaches that historians apply to counterfactual history: Military historians reconstruct alternative outcomes of battles in excruciating detail and economic historians employ statistical data and economic models to “test” counterfactual questions framed within theoretical models. As historian Niall Ferguson notes, neither group has been able to generate a great deal of enthu-

siasm among other historians. The explanation for this lack of enthusiasm, he notes, is that the work of the first group is “essentially the product of imagination” but lacks “an empirical basis,” while the second is “designed to test hypotheses by (supposedly) empirical means, which eschew imagination in favor of computation.”²⁶

Ferguson’s dichotomy is perceptive, but it begs the larger question of whether or not the two approaches could be combined into a complex story that goes beyond the immediate effects of a single counterfactual event and explores the possibilities that might evolve from a series of counterfactual changes. We noted earlier that interest in counterfactual analysis pertains to events that are turning points in history. It is clear that historians are able to use their historical analyses to identify these turning points. Moreover, having chosen the turning points, they have sufficient imagination to come up with various possible alternative outcomes that would have changed history. The problem is that even if you are able to unravel the alternative possibilities from one turning point, you will soon encounter a new juncture at which history could again take a different course. What is extremely difficult to construct is a meaningful narrative of counterfactual history beyond the first imaginary turning points. How do we keep the counterfactual story from exploding into a myriad of different tales, all going in different directions?

One answer is the use of what I have called the historical mold to shape the initial burst of possibilities to fit the world around them. That is what economic historians do best; they provide theoretical paths along which our counterfactual story must travel. A second constraint is the issue of plausibility. Historians and economists alike would agree to exclude those possibilities that go beyond the limits of what is plausible. But what is “plausible”? Niall Ferguson carries this criterion to its most extreme limit when he argues that we should consider “as plausible or probable *only those alternatives which we can show on the basis of contemporary evidence that contemporaries actually considered.*”²⁷ While his point about tying the counterfactual to contempo-

rary evidence is well taken, his requirement that contemporaries be able to consider subsequent events is highly restrictive. Can we expect that contemporaries who are considering the possibility of going to war in 1860 will accurately foresee the enormous changes that might result from the war? Probably not. Indeed, it is clear that they did *not* anticipate those changes. Ferguson's criteria would therefore restrict our story to only the most immediate effects of the war. There are many alternatives that contemporaries could not foresee but that our historical perspective tells us were indeed not only possible but perhaps even likely. We must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water in discarding alternatives as "infeasible" in terms of the options apparent to people at the time.

While it may be too limiting to curtail the broad scope of our analysis, the emphasis on limiting the range of possible counterfactuals to those that could be imagined by contemporaries does bring out an important use of counterfactual analysis in history. Up to now we have been discussing issues of what might have been. That is, we are considering the possible outcomes of some turning point in history after the fact. But what historians looking at the problem years later treat as "counterfactual" possibilities that did *not* happen, contemporaries at the time viewed as possibilities of the future that *might* happen. They were considering alternatives of what might be. As David Potter notes in his counterfactual analysis of the crisis of 1850, "this reading of possible options involved beliefs as well as facts, and historians, of course, do not agree on them as if they were factual."²⁸ His point is crucial to an understanding of how counterfactuals can shed light on the coming of an event such as the Civil War. Like most wars, the Civil War did not "just happen." Political and military leaders chose courses of action that produced a conflict. The what-might-be alternatives formulated by contemporaries subsequently became the historians' what-might-have-been counterfactuals. Examining how these what-might-be options were formulated can provide valuable insights into the deci-

sions on which what-might-have-been counterfactuals will provide the best insights into the historical turning point under investigation.

WHERE DOES this leave us in our search for a counterfactual “methodology”? In his book *Plausible Worlds* the philosopher Geoffrey Hawthorn suggests that since there are no definitive criteria for determining the parameters of the “best” alternative world, perhaps we should simply “take our commonsensical experience of the human world seriously.”²⁹ This seems to be sound advice. Yet even if common sense prevails, there may still be a tug-of-war between the views of historians who insist that counterfactual analysis must always be plausible and cliometricians who claim that the emphasis on plausibility is overstated and that what matters is having an analytical model to provide insights into the problem at hand. Part of the difficulty here is that both groups have strong preferences for the style in which counterfactual history should be written. Historians want the counterfactual scenario to unfold as a historical narrative, picking up the story at the point where things have changed and relating the plausible consequences. What follows, in their minds, must be a direct extension of the immediate past. Cliometricians take the existing historical situation as the basis for their model and explore several counterfactual possibilities by tweaking various elements of the model to produce a different set of outcomes. How “real” the adjusted outcome is depends on the properties of the model. One of the key issues here is the cliometricians’ unquestioning acceptance of the rule of *ceteris paribus*, the dictum that “other” things *do not change*.

All of which brings us back to Ferguson’s dichotomy. Historians rely on imagination but fear that it may get out of hand; cliometricians rely on crunching their numbers and must correspondingly limit their analyses to the fixed parameters of their theoretic models. Common sense can help both groups make reasonable decisions, but it will not

provide either with an obvious way to escape the fetters placed on the scope of their analysis. We are still confronted with the question of how one can construct a narrative counterfactual story that will be plausible enough for the historians and offer useful analytical insights to the social scientists. There is, it appears, no way to completely escape the problems of scope and continuity in counterfactual history. Short stories are OK but not too illuminating; longer narratives, even when they promise illuminating insights down the road, tend to get lost in the branches of the counterfactual narrative.

What of the possibility of addressing a “big” question by combining a number of shorter stories? The idea of linking together a series of smaller counterfactual questions in order to provide insights into a larger historical question seems a good one. What is needed is a clearer identification of the larger counterfactual question driving the analysis. We began this chapter by posing just such a question: *What If the South Won the Civil War?* To explore the implications of a Southern victory, it is necessary to look at a number of turning points, both real and imagined. Some of the turning points will use counterfactual insights to explore the coming of war and the ways in which the South might win the war; others will consider counterfactual situations that would arise if the South won. These counterfactual situations will be derived from the outcomes of the earlier turning points, but they will also be constrained by a secondary counterfactual scenario that places the two North American states in a larger historical environment of the mid-nineteenth-century world. At the end of each chapter our analysis can be “reset” for the next set of turning points. Thus we will begin with an analysis of choices in the 1850s that is firmly grounded in the historical reality facing Americans at that time and eventually move on to some highly speculative projections of what a world with two rival states in North America might look like in 1900. Our narrative will combine the analysis of what we know about the world in the late nineteenth century with a sufficient dose of historical imagination to project the impact of a Southern victory in the American Civil War.

We have discussed the basic ingredients of counterfactual analysis at some length, and a few general guidelines have emerged. Any counterfactual analysis must rest on a solid foundation that is based on *historical reality*. When that historical reality is changed, it is important that counterfactual possibilities be *plausible*, though we cautioned that care must be taken to see that the attention to plausibility does not become stifling. We suggested that *imagination* and *common sense* are useful ingredients to allow the counterfactual narrative to range far enough afield to offer interesting insights to the historical situation. Finally, we argued that analytical models can provide an important guide to the formulation of a *historical mold* that allows us to examine the larger ramifications of our counterfactual situation in the context of historical change. Useful though these guidelines might be, there are no hard-and-fast rules for constructing counterfactual historical scenarios. Like the chef who carefully combines the ingredients to prepare his signature dish, each historian uses his own “recipe” for shaping fact and counterfact into his finished counterfactual narrative.

Following is the best approximation I can offer of the recipe that I used in my examination of an American Civil War that was won by the South:

**ROGER’S RECIPE FOR
COUNTERFACTUAL HISTORY PUDDING**

Take:

2 parts historical plausibility

1 part common sense

1 part imagination

Mix ingredients until they are blended into a smooth, even texture. If the texture seems uneven or coarse, try a little more common sense. If the pudding seems gray and boring, add imagination.

Carefully pour ingredients into a mold shaped in the form of a well-defined historical setting.

Allow to set until pudding has firmly gelled. Be careful not to remove pudding from historical setting.

Serve with a large dose of skepticism, and remember that there is no proof in this pudding.

Bon appétit!