History of War – fall 2019

Daniel Menicucci Teixeira  
n01302953

Question:

*How do we account for the success of Alexander the Great?*

Answer:

The success of Alexander the Great is base a plethora of reasons. He learned from his father, Phillip II the versatile tactics of the Macedonian Phalanx, that employed cavalry, light skirmishers, bowman and heavier missile weapons (such as slings and javelins) in meticulous synchronization. Even though it’s main strength remained in the infantry’s Phalanx, Alexander’s army was very versatile and could adapt to different terrains and situations, unlike most western armies of his time.

Also thanks to his father, Alexander’s army was a professional one, which was to the norm for his time. That meant not only his soldiers were better trained and disciplined, but they were available to practice war all year long, since they did not have to sow or harvest fields, like most Greek hoplites.

Much like his army, Alexander himself was a flexible strategist. He was not bound by tradition or arbitrary rules, making strategies for each battle taking in consideration terrain, enemy forces and their positioning, supplies, etc. This allowed him to be both always prepared and unpredictable to a certain extent.  
 His logistical genius was also remarkable, being the first person, on the western world at least, to march such a large army so far from home. To this end he carefully chose routs, imposed restrictions on the use of beasts of burden, employed a fleet for supply management and, on occasion, decided against engaging in battles he could win, due to the cost in supplies it would impose on his army.

Lastly, Alexander was a very charismatic leader, if not person, his bravery in charging at the head of the cavalry and his constant care in making his image similar to that of Greek heroes brought awe and inspiration to his troops, which are vital for keeping loyalty and discipline among the ranks of soldiers.