with their lives. This year, Darius would do it himself, and he would do it right.

Darius departed Susa, seat of his imperial administration, with a vast army, supported by an equally impressive logistical train and any number of camp followers. He even brought his own household on this expedition, including his mother, Sisygambis, and his wife, who was also his sister. Named Stateira, she was described by ancient historians as either the most beautiful woman in Asia, or with greater hyperbole, as the most beautiful woman in the world. Also present were the daughters of Darius and Stateira. Both under the age of 10, the younger one was named Drypteis, and the older one was known in most accounts as Stateira, like her mother, although Arrian calls her Barsine.

The exact size of the Persian army with which these women traveled is open to speculation. As Plutarch describes it, Darius was "coming down to the coast from Susa, exalted in spirit by the magnitude of his forces, for he was leading an army of 600,000 men."

In fact, the Persian force was probably significantly smaller than the second-century reports indicate.* Modern estimates suggest a force of around 100,000 troops, still a vast multitude that outnumbered Alexander by better than two-to-one. Among these were at least 10,000 highly trained Greek mercenaries and the "10,000 Immortals," an elite force of highly trained and fiercely loyal Persian troops who constituted both Darius's palace guard and the core of his standing army. The rest of the infantry would have included both Persians and troops drawn from Persian dominions in central Asia.

Justinus, whose estimate of the Persian manpower outnumbering Alexander was 400,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry, wrote "So vast a multitude of enemies caused some distrust in Alexander, when he contemplated the smallness of his own army."

However, Alexander's strategic doctrine was based not on the application of overwhelming force but on molding an army of moderate

*John Clark Ridpath in *History of the World* (New York: Philips and Hunt, 1885), volume 1, chapter 47, calculates that there were 140,000 troops in the Persian army that marched out of Susa in 333 BC.

size into a fighting machine whose skill overcame its smallness. As such, it was not unlike the war plans adopted by NATO during the Cold War to address the alliance's numerical inferiority to Warsaw Pact forces.

It was now, after one year in the field, that Alexander's intuitive understanding of the demands of leadership was increasingly important. This was manifest in the way that he treated his troops. In an era when the notion of granting a leave from the front was an alien concept, Alexander sent troops back to Macedonia and Greece for R&R. When they returned, they brought new recruits. Alexander's generosity proved to be a recruiting tool. This is another example of Alexander's being ahead of his time and of his thinking outside the confines of the box of traditional practices.

Arguably, the most important of Alexander's leadership traits was his ability to inspire. Arrian writes of other interactions between Alexander and his men as they too contemplated the smallness of their army. He tells us that "lest dismay should fall upon his men, he rode round among his troops, and addressed those of each nation in an appropriate speech. He excited the Illyrians and Thracians by describing the enemy's wealth and treasures, and the Greeks by putting them in mind of their wars of old, and their deadly hatred towards the Persians. He reminded the Macedonians at one time of their conquests in Europe, and at another of their desire to subdue Asia, boasting that no troops in the world had been found a match for them, and assuring them that this battle would put an end to their labors and crown their glory."

As such, he made the campaign personal, stressing and appealing to the motives and aspirations of each group under his command, whether that be a desire for revenge, for glory, or for proving that they were the best of the best. Today, a commander might do the same thing by appealing to a soldier's patriotism, or to a person's role as a member of an elite group, as is the case within the U.S. Marine Corps.

Darius studied his map for a place to stop the advance of Alexander's army, and he found it. In order to march his troops to the Mediterranean coastline from the Anatolian Plateau of central Asia Minor, Alexander needed to cross the Taurus Mountains, and there was essen-

tially only one place to do this efficiently. Darius noted that Alexander would have to pass through what was known in antiquity as the Cilician Gates. Now known as Gülek Pass, the 3,400-foot pass is traversed by the six-lane E90 superhighway. In October 333 BC, it was traversed by the equivalent—an important and much-used caravan highway.

The Cilician Gates presented Darius with unique opportunities. Often a commander does not know where an enemy will be next. This time Darius knew. Alexander would have to go this way. A narrow pass also presents multiple opportunities for a defender, as high ground can be fortified before the battle and narrowness takes away room in which an attacker can maneuver. It was a battle that Darius should have won.

But by having arrived at the gates after Alexander had passed, Darius lost. Alexander knew that Darius was coming—it was hardly a secret that the vast Greco-Macedonian army was moving across Asia Minor—so he force-marched his troops to get through before the huge, unwieldy Persian army arrived. A small Persian advance guard was on hand to challenge Alexander, but he cut through easily under cover of darkness, and the skirmish was a mere whisper of what could have been a decisive battle.

Alexander was out of the mountains and had occupied the city of Tarsus before Darius could comprehend the magnitude of another missed opportunity.

Located near the Mediterranean, Tarsus was an important crossroads and trading city with a history that already spanned more than 6,000 years. Parenthetically, it would later be important as the birthplace of Saint Paul, and as the place where Marc Antony and Cleopatra first met. The town might have been just another tiny footnote to Alexander's story had it not been for a microbe that almost did what Darius had failed to do.

Upon reaching Tarsus, Alexander decided to take a dip in the Cydnus River (now Tarsus Çay). Aristobulus reports that it was very hot, and "in profuse perspiration [Alexander] leaped into the river Cydnus and swam, being eager to bathe in its water [but that afterward] Alexander was seized with convulsions, accompanied with high fever and continuous sleeplessness."

Contemporary accounts blame the cold water—it was November—but a bacterial infection seems more likely. Arrian adds that "none of

the physicians thought he was likely to survive, except Philip, an Acarnanian, a physician in attendance on the king, and very much trusted by him in medical matters, who also enjoyed a great reputation in the army in general affairs."

Apparently, this reputation was not embraced by Parmenio. Alexander's biographers mention that when Philip prescribed an herbal potion, Parmenio passed a note to the young king cautioning him that Philip might have been bribed by Darius to poison him. Alexander ignored Parmenio, drank the medicine and collapsed. As Plutarch writes, "at first the medicine mastered the patient, and as it were drove back and buried deep his bodily powers, so that his voice failed, he fell into a swoon, and became almost wholly unconscious." However, Alexander soon recovered his strength, and "showed himself to the Macedonians, who refused to be comforted until they had seen Alexander."

By the time Alexander had marched to Mallus on the Mediterranean coast, he had word that the Persian army was two days away, due east, across the Gulf of Issus (now Gulf of Iskenderun) and across the Amanus (now Nur) Mountains, at Sochoi (or Sochi) in the Syrian plains. Parmenio, with an advance guard, was already part way around the gulf and camped near the village of Issus.

To get a sense of the geography, imagine the Gulf of Issus as a clockface. Mallus was at the nine o'clock position, and Issus was at one o'clock. Sochoi was due east of the three o'clock position. Near the two o'clock position, the gulf was fed by a stream then known as the Pinarus River, whose precise modern equivalent is subject to debate.

As at the Cilician Gates, terrain around the Gulf of Issus was destined to be an important factor when the two sides met. The coastal plain in the area was relatively narrow, just a few miles wide, and crowded between the Mediterranean and the steep Amanus Mountains. We should add that the coastal plain was itself not flat, but consisted of rolling hills that would complicate troop movements and visibility.

Alexander quickly moved the bulk of his force to Issus, established a base camp and continued clockwise around the Gulf of Issus to the town of Myriandros (later named for Alexander as Alexandretta, and

now known in Turkish as Iskenderun) at the five o'clock position, probing toward the Persians, who were across the mountains.

Darius, meanwhile, decided to remain on the far side of the mountains and move counterclockwise from three o'clock to one, toward a place where he could cross the mountains above Issus and position himself in Alexander's rear, cutting him off from his base camp.

Had Darius remained on the open plains near Sochoi, Alexander probably would have attacked him there. Darius would have had room to maneuver and utilize his superior numbers more easily than he could on the cramped coastal plain around Issus. As it was, Darius was probably able to get just a portion of his 100,000 or so troops into position.

As Arrian writes, Amyntas, a deserter from Alexander's army, "advised him not to abandon this position [at Sochoi], because the open country was favorable to the great multitude of the Persians and the vast quantity of their baggage." However, like George Armstrong Custer at the Little Bighorn, Darius feared that his foe would slip away and avoid a decisive battle, so he moved to attack.

When he got word of Darius's movements, Alexander reversed himself at Myriandros, heading back counterclockwise, retracing his steps toward Issus. He had no intention of avoiding a fight. Knowing that Darius himself was present that day was an important driving force, causing Alexander to look forward to the coming battle.

As Arrian writes, Alexander called together his generals and cavalry commanders, exhorting them "to take courage from the dangers which they had already surmounted, asserting that the struggle would be between themselves who had been previously victorious and a foe who had already been beaten; and that the deity was acting the part of general on their behalf better than himself, by putting it into the mind of Darius to move his forces from the spacious plain and shut them up in a narrow place, where there was sufficient room for themselves to deepen their phalanx by marching from front to rear, but where their vast multitude would be useless to the enemy in the battle. He added that their foes were similar to them neither in strength nor in courage."

Unlike the situation at the Cilician Gates, this time Darius managed to arrive first, accomplishing his goal of getting between Alexander and his camp at Issus. The Persians even managed to dig in and

construct some defensive positions along the Pinarus River. Since it was November, the river was at its lowest and was therefore less of a terrain factor than the Granicus had been 18 months earlier. However, as Arrian writes, probably quoting Aristobulus or Callisthenes, the Greek chroniclers who accompanied Alexander and upon whose accounts the later biographers relied, many parts of the river bank were steep and precipitous.

Darius positioned himself in his chariot at the center of his command, as was standard Persian practice. The bulk of his cavalry was on his right wing, on flatter ground near the Gulf of Issus. He had some cavalry on his left, but he considered it a waste of resources to put too many horses into the steep foothills where it was harder to maneuver.

In the center, the Greek mercenaries faced the Macedonian phalanx, including troops led by Coenus and Craterus, Alexander's veteran infantry commanders.

The Greco-Macedonian order of battle had the cavalry equally divided, with Parmenio on the left, near the gulf, in command of a force that included Peloponnesian cavalry. Also on the left wing were Cretan archers with Thracians under the command of Sitalces in front. Parmenio's mandate was to hold the seacoast and not allow the Persians to outflank him and cut him off from the sea.

Alexander himself commanded his elite Companion Cavalry, as well as the Thessalian horsemen that were on the right wing, at the base of the mountains. In turn, these troops were augmented by an infantry guard under the command of Nicanor, a son of Parmenio. The Greek mercenaries who had defected from the Persians the previous year in Asia Minor formed Alexander's reserve.

As Alexander approached, Darius sent his cavalry forward across the river. When Alexander saw that Darius had concentrated his cavalry on the seaward wing of his formation, he shifted the Thessalian cavalry from right to left.

Meanwhile, the Persian left wing curved so much into the mountains that part of it actually circled behind Alexander's right wing as he advanced. To address this, he moved two squadrons of the Companion Cavalry, under Peroedas and Pantordanus, from the center to the right wing.

According to Arrian, Alexander also placed some of the cavalry and archers "so as to form an angle with the centre towards the moun-

tain which was in the rear; so that on the right, his phalanx had been drawn up separated into two wings, the one fronting Darius and the main body of Persians beyond the river, and the other facing those who had been posted at the mountain in their rear."

Darius had done everything right. He had organized his superior forces logically, and he had constructed defensive positions to stymie a counterattack even if his own attack failed. He had troops on the high ground above Alexander's right flank. The Persians waited as the Greco-Macedonian army advanced slowly. When the arrows began to fly, Alexander himself led a lightning charge across the river against the Persian left wing, surprising them with his speed.

"As Alexander had conjectured," says Arrian, "as soon as the battle became a hand-to-hand one, the part of the Persian army stationed on the left wing was put to rout; and here Alexander and his men won a brilliant victory."

However, the Greek mercenaries in the Persian center attacked the Greco-Macedonian phalanx, who had lost touch with their own right wing. This was because Alexander had penetrated deeply into the enemy lines, and his phalanx had not kept pace.

Ideally, the Persian phalanx should have closed behind Alexander's cavalry as they ran deep behind Persian lines, surrounding them. Fortunately, Alexander's quick early success had unbalanced the Persians. They became too busy fighting the Greco-Macedonian center to worry about their own left flank—to their own peril.

Darius had lightly packed his cavalry on his left in the foothills because he didn't expect a cavalry fight in that sector. Therefore, Alexander's Companions were able to rout them and send them running. This meant that the Companions were now able to outflank the Persian center.

It was a classic Macedonian maneuver. Alexander led a hammer that slammed the Persian phalanx against the anvil of his own phalanx. Meanwhile, the Persians who were in the hills above Alexander's far right failed to attack.

On the wing adjacent to the Gulf of Issus, where the Persian right faced Parmenio and the Greco-Macedonian left, the Persian cavalry took the offensive and crossed the river. Unlike the other wing, where Alexander's charge had quickly unsettled the Persians, the seaward Persian wing held its ground.