

FUND FINANCE FRIDAY

Outside the Lines – 'An Army at Dawn'

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Outside the Lines



By Michael Mascia
Partner | Fund Finance

I had lunch with Jonathan Gray, who leads East West Bank's fund finance business, early in 2019. He told me about how his father fought in Tunisia when the United States first entered World War II, and how he and his family recently have been traveling to North Africa and Europe to retrace his dad's steps. I was pretty captivated. (I'm trying to twist his arm to write a column about it.) I had been looking to do something around the 75th Anniversary of D-Day besides watching *Saving Private Ryan* for the 11th time so I asked for a reading recommendation. Jonathan suggested *An Army at Dawn* by Rick Atkinson. I had hoped to finish it by June 6th but needed the plane trip to and from London last week to get it done. It's not hard to fathom why it won the Pulitzer.

Atkinson is a hell of an author. The level of research he put into the book is astounding. He is also extremely confident in his military and political judgments. There is no hesitation at all in negatively critiquing the entire continuum from the battle tactics of battalion commanders to the strategy and political astuteness of Eisenhower, Patton and Rommel. I found the book more enjoyable when I accepted his critiques on their face; trying to analyze the maneuvers to confirm Atkinson's assessment was too time-consuming. There are times when Atkinson overdoses on the intellect. I'm not used to needing Google to follow an analogy. He has written a trilogy on World War II (*An Army at Dawn* is the first volume) and in May just released the first volume of an American Revolution trilogy titled *The British are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777*.

The North Africa campaign is fascinating. The initial fumbling and insecurities of Roosevelt, Eisenhower and Patton somehow escaped my history lessons. One of my favorite passages is when Patton loses his mind with Major General Orlando Ward and screams at him to take the high ground at Maknassy: "I don't want any goddam excuses. I want you to get out there and get that hill. You lead the attack personally. Don't come back 'til you've got it." (That's sort of how Pat Quinn, Cadwalader's Managing Partner, talks to me.) And so Ward, a Major General in his 50s, leads 2,000 men from the very front, runs with the lead group of 8 men, and gets hit in

the eye and nose from a shell fragment. Earning Patton's enduring loyalty? No, Patton fired him shortly thereafter ... I plan to follow the Atkinson trilogy on to Sicily and Normandy, but I am taking a break with some lighter reading first. The book is available on Amazon [here](#).

FFF is taking next week off. If you celebrate July 4th, I hope you have a good holiday.