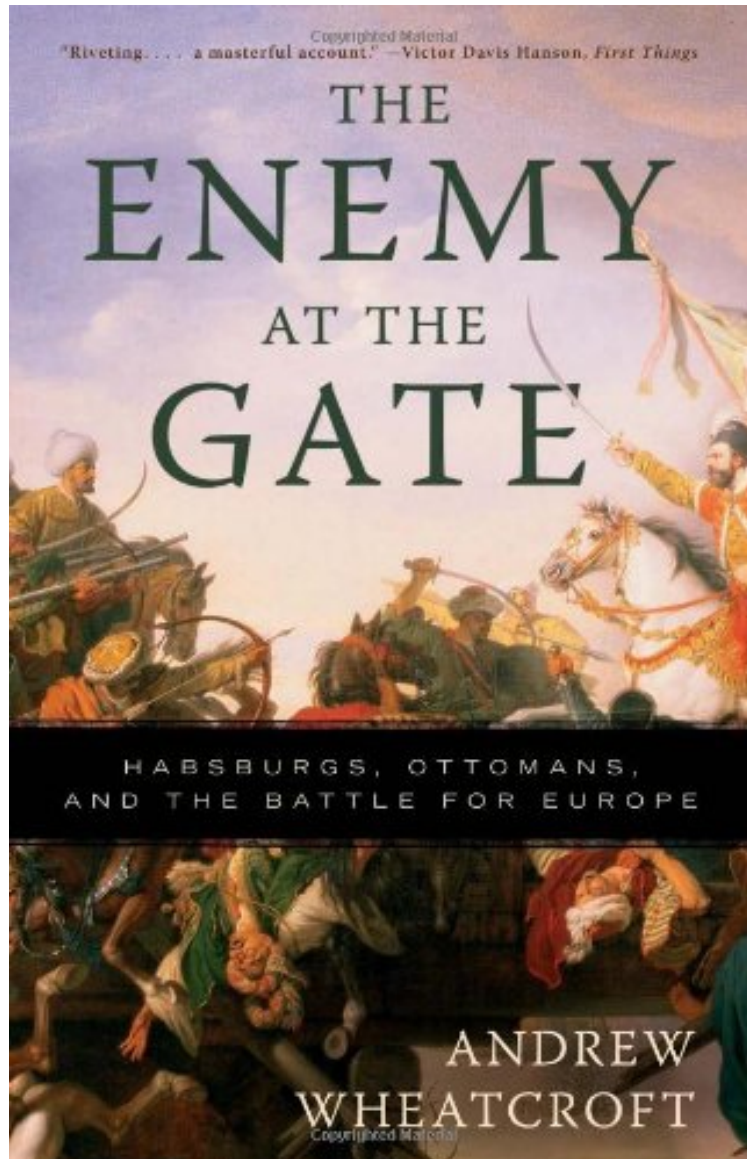


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The Enemy at the Gate: Habsburgs, Ottomans, and the Battle for Europe

Andrew Wheatcroft

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In 1683, an Ottoman army that stretched from horizon to horizon set out to seize the “Golden Apple,” as Turks referred to Vienna. The ensuing siege pitted battle-hardened Janissaries wielding seventeenth-century grenades against Habsburg armies, widely feared for their savagery. The walls of Vienna bristled with guns as the besieging Ottoman host launched bombs, fired cannons, and showered the populace with arrows during the battle for Christianity's bulwark. Each side was sustained by the hatred of its age-old enemy, certain that victory would be won by the grace of God.The Great Siege of Vienna is the centerpiece for historian Andrew Wheatcroft's richly drawn portrait of the centuries-long rivalry between the Ottoman and Habsburg empires for control of the European continent. A gripping work by a master historian, *The Enemy at the Gate* offers a timely examination of an epic clash of civilizations.

From School Library JournalWheatcroft (director, Centre for Publishing Studies, Univ. of Stirling, Scotland; Infidels) offers a richly detailed account of the 1683 Ottoman siege of Vienna and subsequent battle with the Hapsburg central European forces. Although focusing on a single military campaign, Wheatcroft draws on decades of his own research on the Hapsburg-Ottoman conflict to provide needed historical context for the events of war. As Wheatcroft aptly states in his introduction, his is in fact a broader study that seeks to understand "Europe's fear of the Turks" within the frame of a specific Ottoman-Hapsburg military clash. Much of Wheatcroft's detail comes from European accounts of life in the Ottoman Empire and first-person descriptions of war, but the inherent bias in these sources is always acknowledged. As a result, Wheatcroft is able to move beyond tales of the "Terrible Turks" to provide a realistic portrayal of Ottoman leadership, a political context for the Hapsburg-Ottoman conflict, and a description of the shifting balance of power between these two dynasties. This is not a work of popular history for the casual reader, but scholars and students of history would benefit greatly from this well-researched account of 17th-century Ottoman-Hapsburg political power.—Veronica Arellano, Univ. of Houston Libs. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From BooklistFour centuries ago, the West really was involved in a seminal “clash of cultures” against an aggressive Islamic power, and that struggle reached its zenith at the siege of Vienna in 1683. Wheatcroft has written a fast-moving and exciting account of this sustained conflict and the history-turning siege that may well have preserved the Christian character of Europe. Since their smashing defeat of the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, Turkish nomadic warriors had threatened Europe, but the Ottomans had harnessed the power of an efficient state to their superior logistics and mobile cavalry. On the front line opposing the Ottoman advance were the forces of the polyglot Hapsburg Empire. Wheatcroft indicates that the Hapsburgs had their own particular assets, including a superbly trained infantry, and an effective, largely Polish cavalry. Relying to a large extent on contemporary Hapsburg sources, Wheatcroft offers an outstanding blow-by-blow description of the siege, which in the end was decided through a combination of luck and several critical Ottoman blunders. --Jay Freeman New York Times Book “As Andrew Wheatcroft brilliantly shows in *The Enemy at the Gate*, the skirmishes and the pitched battles that raged for centuries between Habsburgs and Ottomans, and their numerous vassals on both sides, represented not so much a ‘clash of civilizations’ as a collision of empires.... [H]is narrative is thrilling as well as thoughtful, a rare combination.”Washington Times “There are two stories here worth telling and well told: the blood-and-thunder tale of the heroic defense of Vienna against the Ottomans in 1683, the surge in morale after the Habsburg victory, and the war to recover Hungary and the Balkans from the Turks. The other story is of the obsessive fear and hatred of the Turks in Christian central Europe, exorcised by the Habsburg victory at Vienna, turning to revenge and reconquest led first by Duke Charles of Lorraine, then by the legendary Prince Eugene of Savoy, ending in exhausted and bankrupt stability.”Telegraph “[A] riveting narrative, Andrew Wheatcroft's *The Enemy at the Gate*...tells the story of the final Habsburg-Ottoman showdown at the gates of Vienna in 1683, one of the genuine turning points in European history.”