



Getting Somalia Wrong?: Faith, War and Hope in a Shattered State (African Arguments)

By Mary Harper

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Somalia is a comprehensively failed state, representing a threat to itself, its neighbors, and the wider world. In recent years, it has become notorious for the piracy off its coast and the rise of Islamic extremism, opening it up as a new "southern front" in the war on terror. At least that is how it is inevitably presented by politicians and in the media. In *Getting Somalia Wrong?*, Mary Harper presents the first comprehensive account of the chaos into which the country has descended and the United States' renewed involvement there. In doing so, Harper argues that viewing Somalia through the prism of al-Qaeda risks further destabilizing the country and the entire Horn of Africa, while also showing that though the country may be a failed state, it is far from being a failed society. In reality, alternative forms of business, justice, education, and local politics have survived and even flourished. Provocative and eye-opening, *Getting Somalia Wrong?* shows that until the international community starts to "get it right," the consequences will be devastating, not just for Somalia, but for the world.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The most accessible and accurate account available of the contemporary Somali world - pirates and all." - Iain Lewis, author of *Understanding Somalia and Somaliland*

"For the past two decades, books on Somalia have tended to mirror some of the attitudes about the country itself. They have been either analyses by a small and highly specialised field of policy analysts and academics, or written from and for the perspective that caters to the most common clichés and impressions about this most failed of failed states; a nation of warlords, pirates, jihadists and refugees fleeing in unseaworthy boats often only to drown. All of these are of course part of the narrative of Somalia's inability to break from its repeated cycles of the failure of domestic politics and outside intervention over the past 25 years, but what Mary Harper has done is to explain this narrative as a whole - rather than a series of snapshots. This is a book which is clear, accessible and thorough. It has done what books on Somalia rarely do, which is to examine the multitude of failures, misunderstandings, and wilful acts of destruction that have caused Somalia's downfall, but it has also gone much further, by outlining the huge part of the hidden Somalia that have survived the decades of turmoil and which are the only foundations upon which anything approaching a post conflict and stable Somalia can be built. There are significant parts of Somalia where civil society is functioning with fragile but functioning institutions of business and commerce, security and representation. She has written and explained this detailed yet vital aspect of the Somali crisis in a way that is accessible and enlightening not just to the international reader but also to those shaping global policy on Somalia. This is an important book for both." - Rageh Omaar, host of *The Rageh Omaar Report* and author of *Only Half of Me*

About the Author

Mary Harper is a BBC journalist specializing in Africa. She has reported from Somalia since the outbreak of civil war in 1991 and from other war zones across Africa, including Sudan, Liberia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She has written for several publications including *The Economist* and *The Washington Post*.

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