
**Marry Harper, Getting Somalia Wrong? Faith War and Hope in a Shattered State (New York&London: Zed Books, 2012) 217 Sayfa.
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Getting Somalia Wrong? is telling the story of Somalia not only the bad, as many people expect from the Black Continent, but also the good. The good ways which carved with incentives and hopes of people who experiencing a civil war under a malfunctioning state. The book consists of six sections and the first is devoted to describe the bare bones of Somalia society: nomadic culture; society, divided along clan lines; poetry, crucial part of the people's life; and qat (narcotic leafs). The writer tries to scratch the complicated structure of the clan system and mentions the problems about the relations between clans. Second section of the book is a brief history of the country. At the following sections *Islamism* and *A Failed State*, Harper gives details of the roots of current situation of the country. The writer examines the 'Failed State' phenomenon and the gaps at implementation of the term on Somalia. Finally, under the *Piracy* section she tries to picture how Somalia affects other countries regionally via focusing terrorism and migration.

Mary Harper is a writer and journalist who is known with her articles and assessments on Africa. Currently, she is working as African Editor of BBC World News. The book, *Getting Somalia Wrong* is shaped with her living experience in Somalia, the interviews and the academic literature. Harper has articles at The Guardian, Granta, The Times and African Arguments and she has experience on the UN programs. In addition to *Getting Somalia Wrong*, she also stands as the translator of *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly* by J-F. Bayart.

I would like to start with the name of the book. After the collapse of the central authority in Somalia with the overthrown of Siad Barre, civil war broke out in 1991. By 1992 UN Peace Keeping Mission (UNOSOM), later it replaced with UNITAF, steps on. Reaction against foreign troops grew strongly in the country. By 1993 the reaction against the Mission troops came with the helicopter crash and killing of 20 Pakistani peacekeepers and USA soldiers faced, as the readers can remember from a Hollywood film, "Black Hawk Down". This tragedy reminded the US and international community of Vietnam War. It is understood that the UN operation was ineffective and the troops withdrew because direct involvement would not help Somalia.

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Harper argues that this mistake repeated periodically in the history of Somalia. In 2006, a US backed intervention of Ethiopia was another example of it. This second mistake -Harper multiply these mistakes by going back to colonial acts- costs destruction of Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) which brought relative peace and order for a short time to the country. Along these incidents, Harper claims that Somalia is the best example in terms of humanitarian intervention and foreign policy of how not to do. Harper argues that the destruction of UIC led to radicalization of the Islamic groups and birth of another terrorist organization: el-Shabaab.

Somalia is considered as a dangerous state at global and regional scale because of the terrorism and migration problems. Reason of this fact is that Somalia is a 'Failed State'. Harper examines the term 'failed' deeply and accepts that the term is not a neutral definition and claims that the reason of this situation is the fact that every observation and judgment made through the point of the capital, Mogadishu. Harper objects to the term by arguing that state may be failed but not society in Somalia and says "...state 'failure' does not mean country failure."¹ To support her argument she gives the examples of well functioning economy; the mini-states such as self declared republic of Somaliland -not internationally recognized-; Somalia's leader position in livestock export at East Africa; and advanced money transfer and telecommunication systems. Writer opens a new debate on the 'failed state' term based on her own objectives.

Another point Harper raises brilliantly is how the nation state does not fit on Somalia example. Although Somalia is home for people who share same language, religion, ethnicity and culture, there is a de-facto division as Puntland, Somaliland and south-central since 2011. The trials of imposition of nation state model on the country end up unsuccessful. The clans have been seen as an obstacle for stable modern Somalia nation state. Clans are basis of the organizational and legal structure of Somali society, so getting rid of it should not be an option. Harper goes further by bringing Somaliland example which stands as a mixture of tradition and modern. From Somaliland example, she hails the synthesis of the old and new at the administration system and argues the feasibility of the Somaliland example to the whole country. It is not a secret anymore that the nation state model is problematic for the whole continent. On the one hand African Union tries to hold countries together and on the other hand the countries suffer irredentist and secessionist groups and states. Not only in Africa but also the world discusses the alternatives of nation state model since 1990s. That is why the arguments at *Getting Somalia Wrong?* are crucial for alternative state models at Africa.

The book comes forward with its coherent and clear language, so the audience can vary from the experts to beginner who interested in the country. Also the book is written by a person who spent many years at the continent and, thanks to

¹ Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2012), 141.

her reporter identity, she had chance to do many interviews with pirates, nomads, ex-militias in addition to the help of academic literature. African apocalypse is pictured via images of hunger, poverty, disease, violence, piracy and terrorism. Somalia became a market for bad news. As a journalist even Harper made a self-criticism about her way of servicing the news about Somalia. In a way she accepts the blames of bad perception of people about the country. The most remarkable feature of the book is that it is far from being pessimist about Africa. Harper acknowledges the good sides of the Somali society and highlights them, and also dig in to the alternatives of the solution for Somalia. *Getting Somalia Wrong?* serves well to its purpose by highlighting the positive sides of Somalia in order to destroy the bad reputation of the country.