



**History and Role of the Voice of America (VOA) Amharic Radio
Broadcast**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Ashagre Hailu, entitled *The History and Role of the Voice of America (VOA) Amharic Radio Broadcast*, and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Dedicated To:

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For your thoughts and care

Abstract

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Addis Ababa University, 2014

The major purpose of this study is to assess the history and role of The Voice of America (VOA) Amharic service, one of the international radio broadcasters to Ethiopia. It also examines its relationship with the different regimes that ruled the country during its three decade of broadcasting news and information. The study is purely used a historical approach of the qualitative method and it employed Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's the Political Economy of the Mass Media as its theoretical framework. Qualitative data was collected from different printed or electronic documents and personal interviews with former and current employees of the VOA Amharic service and other people who are directly and indirectly familiar with the service of the radio station.

VOA started its recorded broadcast on Radio Ethiopia during the Imperial period but it didn't last long. After the military regime turned its face towards the socialist camp VOA began its Amharic broadcast live from Washington DC in 1982 to counter anti-US propaganda and to win acceptance among the population, and after the end of Cold War the need to continue or to end the Amharic service was an issue among VOA officials and US diplomats to Ethiopia. But alongside the Amharic service VOA started additional broadcast to Ethiopia in Afan Oromo and Tigregna in 1996.

The study find out that VOA Amharic service served as an alternative source of information, started other language broadcast as Horn of Africa service, connected the Ethiopian diaspora

with home, served as a reliable source of news and information for the private press, created a forum for open discussion among antagonistic groups in the country and diaspora. But the Ethiopian government accused the radio broadcast playing a negative role as a mouth piece of the opposition. And most of the time Ethiopian officials were not willing to speak their side by putting VOA Amharic service as biased and unhelpful, engaged in destabilizing and hate propaganda. The government also admitted that it has tried to jam the broadcast in response to its criticism.

The study recommended that rather than accusing and trying to take down VOA Amharic broadcast off air the government should feature its side of any story to give the listener a chance to understand it and making diverse and balanced information available to the public through the government controlled media. Further studies are needed to understand VOA's broadcasts to Ethiopia more and this study can serve as a spring board for it.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Radio broadcast is the major communication means to most people in the world. As the oldest form of electronic media, the radio industry has experienced significant changes since its humble beginnings in the early 20th century (Alexander, Alison et al, 2004: 207). The development radio undergone makes it accessible defying different barriers. Especially in developing countries radio has remained to be popular to get different kinds of information to foster the day to day activities of people. Radio also has served to influence and persuade political agendas on its audience. In this regard, countries, within their boundaries and beyond use radio to reach as many people as possible to popularize their interests. Voice of America (VOA) is one among such kinds of radio broadcasters.

The advent of computer and internet has made the flow and consumption of information and communication very rapid and simple. Despite the proliferation of sophisticated means of receiving and imparting information and communication technology all over the world, in developing countries, radio is still the main source of news and information for the majority of the population. Especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, radio remains the most important source of news information, as many people do not even have access to a telephone, let alone a computer (Dodds, 2005:P 92).

According to Mytton (2014), radio is by far the dominant and most important mass medium in Africa. Its flexibility, low cost, and oral character meet Africa's situation very well. Yet radio is less developed in Africa than it is anywhere else. There are relatively few radio stations in each of Africa's 53 nations and fewer radio sets per head of population than anywhere else in the world.

Radio remains the top medium in terms of the number of people that it reaches. Even though television has shown considerable growth and despite a widespread liberalization of the press, radio still outstrips both television and the press in reaching most people on the continent. South of the Sahara and north of the Limpopo River, radio remains dominant at the start of the 21st century. The internet is developing fast, mainly in urban areas, but its growth is slowed considerably by the very low level of development of telephone systems (ibid).

This holds true to the Ethiopian media landscape. Up until recently there are only few radio broadcasts that were controlled by the state. Though the 1999 Broadcasting Proclamation set out a legal basis for establishment of private commercial radio (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1999) but, to date, there are only very few commercial radio stations have been established in the capital Addis Ababa. Besides regional government controlled radio stations and some community radios state-owned Ethiopia Radio is the dominant radio player in the country. International broadcasters such as Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle (DW), BBC World Service, Radio Cairo and Radio Vatican also have listeners in Ethiopia (Simon, 2006:16).

Due to the fact that radio can reach millions of people with a simple portable radio set and other advantages of the medium, it is the most favourite among many people. But despite this there are only few alternative radio stations to satisfy the needs of the listeners. Beside this during the cold war super powers and other interested countries and groups started international radio broadcasts to produce and broadcast a variety of contents to penetrate the minds and borders of other countries, especially to third world countries. The pattern of external penetration can clearly be seen following the BBC's decision to begin broadcasting to Africa in native languages in 1957, to be followed by Radio Moscow in 1958, the VOA and Radio Peking in 1959, and Deutsche Welle in 1962 (Taylor, 2003: P43).

Most of the international radio broadcasts were owned by governments who have strong interest to protect and promote their political ideologies and national interests and to undermine the interest of their rivals. While competing in the nuclear and space rivalry, the super powers were locked in the propaganda war using radio.

One of the chief weapons for waging the ideological struggle were organizations like Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and Voice of America, which broadcast continuously into the Soviet bloc throughout the Cold War. Frequently slighted or neglected by realists who believed the Cold War was entirely a matter of tank divisions and nuclear warheads, the U.S.-sponsored radios turned out to play a major role in keeping alive the idea of democracy in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.' (Fukuyama, 1992: p385)

During the Cold War era, Ethiopia was among the targets of the international radio broadcasts from both sides. Following the popular revolution of 1974, the military junta turned its attention towards the Soviet Union. That political decision initiated the west to beam radio broadcasts to challenge the acceptance of the military regime. The Voice of America Amharic service has been one of the leading international radio stations since the Derg Regime came to power in 1974 and continues its operation after the demise of the Derg and the fall of Communism.

Following the fall of communism, the rivalry between the super powers left a place to the idea of globalization and democratization. But radio remained the major source of information in Ethiopia and is the alternative source of information apart from the government and privately owned media. 'According to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's (2011:8) survey broadcasting, radio in particular, is the medium of choice in Ethiopia. Geographical coverage of radio transmissions has reached an estimated 70 percent, while television coverage is close to 60 percent.

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In this regard the Voice of America radio broadcast has served as an additional source of information for more than three decades to listeners in Ethiopia. But the history and role the radio station has played didn't attract much attention. This study attempts to fill that gap.

1.1. Research Problem

Radio Broadcasting is an important medium that fosters to disseminate any information to a large number of audiences at the same time. And to promote countries national goals and objectives within their territory and beyond. So the broadcasting service is particularly important to impart news, information and debates on different issues that help the public to make an informed decision on important issues and policies that affect their lives.

Broadcasters help people to make informed political decisions, and contribute towards increased participation in the development efforts of a country. Particularly, in an environment where illiteracy rate is high, broadcasting services are of immense importance in disseminating development information helping the people understand government programs and policies (Tamre, 2007).

Radio broadcasts, if handled with care, are believed to play an integral role in fostering democracy and development, and have the ability to transform a number of critical areas including government accountability, empowerment of women and minorities and education. The dominant communication medium in much of the world, radio, is inexpensive, available to citizens at all levels of society including the literate, and due to its pervasiveness, is well placed to reach out and give voice to the poor and marginalized group.

Due to the prevalence of high rate of illiteracy and the dominance of poor population in Ethiopia radio broadcasting has been very essential when compared to other forms of media outlets. For these reasons most people rely on radio as a means to obtain information they need. Although the conventional function of broadcast media is to convey news and

information of general interest to the public, interpreting and analyzing of events as well as providing opinion and perspectives on different issues has also become very important (ibid).

In this regard radio broadcasting in Ethiopia was not capable to accommodate different ideas and interests for different reasons. But foreign radio broadcasts were the major sources of information for what the audience couldn't find from the local sources. Among such broadcasters the VOA Amharic service is the one.

Officially, the Voice of America (VOA), Amharic service has been on the air after the fall of Emperor Haile Sillasié in 1974. It served the public as an alternative source of information. And the station has its history, interest and editorial policy to broadcast its programs to Ethiopia. Therefore, it is important to examine the station's history and contribution. This study investigate the history and the role the radio station has played in Ethiopia.

1.2. Objective of the Study

1.2.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to explore the history of VOA and its role as an alternative source of information in Ethiopia.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- A. To assess the history and role of the radio broadcast to Ethiopia;
- B. To find out its contribution as an alternative source of information.

1.3. Research Questions

- A. Why and when did VOA start broadcasting to Ethiopia?
- B. What role has the radio station played in Ethiopia?

1.4. Significance of the study

The findings from this study will shed light on the history behind the establishment and the works of the radio station. Whatever the role the Voice of America played and is still playing will be discussed to extract lessons that can be of use for the local media. Furthermore it will add knowledge about the station and contribute for further researches that can be conducted in the future.

1.5. The scope of the study

Radio broadcast is the major and the cheapest means of disseminating information all over the world especially in the developing countries. Since information is vital to the day to day activity of mankind, the means of communication that present information about events around him and beyond is evolving through time to become very sophisticated.

To satisfy the desire of mankind's thirst to information, the print media took the lead as a means of communication following the advent of Gutenberg's printing machine. Then telegraph took an important role to fill the gap of communication. But the innovation of radio communication and radio broadcast brought a leap forward in the field of dissemination in the early stage of modern communication.

This means of mass communication, radio, is the major focus of this study; though there were and are a number of radio broadcasts that have been beamed towards Ethiopia the, scope of this study only focuses on the Amharic broadcast of the Voice of America (VOA).

The study is not a comprehensive analysis of the content and audience relations rather it is a historical analysis of the Voice of America Amharic service radio broadcast and the role it has played as an alternative source of information. In addition, it does not focus on financial, personnel and technical matters of the radio.

1.6. Limitations of the study

The thesis has three particular limitations: the time constraint and the scope of the study does not permit the analysis and comparison of other foreign radio broadcasts to Ethiopia and local radio broadcasting within the country. Secondly, there are almost no visible researches and studies that were conducted on the VOA Amharic service or if any was conducted, none is made available. This means there are very limited sources that can be useful to this study. Moreover, there are only few people who have the information about the history of the radio broadcast and to make things worse all of them are living abroad.

The limited time frame and resource does not allow investigating audience reception and opinion. Another limitation that should be mentioned is that although there are some articles, studies and few research works on the Voice of America in general (Bumpus & Skelt, (1984)) no research was made on its Amharic service.

1.7. Thesis Organization

The content of this thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter presents a general background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance, scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter two provides reviews of literature on the effectiveness of radio as means of communication, overview of Ethiopian radio history, rise of international radio broadcasting, ownership and propaganda, conceptual background of international radio broadcasting, and finally the chapter gives a highlight on the present Voice of America Amharic service broadcast.

Chapter three, deals with the methods, procedures and techniques used in this thesis. The chapter explains and justifies the preference of the historical approach of the qualitative research as ways of data collection for the study. It also gives a justification for the selection of historical documents, in-depth interviews, and personal observations as data collection tools. In this chapter I will explain the limitations of the historical approach.

Chapter four provides the history of VOA Amharic Service starting from its establishment. Since the Amharic service was started in the year 1982, same year the VOA was established this chapter will look into the history of the Voice of America from the very beginning. In addition, the history of VOA Amharic service radio broadcast situated within the context of the changing political situation of the world in general and Ethiopia in particular will also be covered in the chapter. Thus, the chapter will try to comprise a comprehensive history and role of VOA Amharic broadcast in a changing political situation in its sphere of operation. The chapter also gives a highlight on the major events that had a major impact on the operation of VOA and the Amharic service in Ethiopia and the host country America. Finally, other challenges of the radio broadcast will also be examined in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter five provides conclusion and recommendations with particular reference to the research questions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

Since governments all over the world want to communicate every message to their people, they want to utilize every discovery of the rapidly changing means of mass communication. After the invention of the electronic media (radio and television) the principal communication tool for connecting people has radically shifted from the printed text to the electronic media.

Particularly, after the invention of radio, governments were not slow to recognize the potential of radio broadcasting for spreading message within or across their boundary. The world understands that radio is the most effective medium especially for developing nations, mainly because of these three reasons: first, radio reaches a much larger part of population than print media does. Second, radio does not require literacy. Thirdly, relative to television, both radio's capital cost and its running expenses are small (McLeish, 2005). Thus, in many aspects radio still remains the preferable medium and the most influential medium for the broader and scattered population in different geographic areas. That's why international broadcasters easily adopted the new medium to reach millions of people not only beyond their borders, but also far across seas and oceans with a message that promote their interest.

Accordingly, most countries in the northern hemisphere are the pioneers of international radio broadcasting. The sponsors and owners of the radio broadcasts began these international broadcasts on the bases of their particular interest to fulfil and influence through the radio broadcasts they beam towards the targeted audience. In most cases, the targeted countries and people have no involvement in the contents of the radio broadcasts directed to them. Most of these radio broadcasts mainly carry political message to influence the audience

who receive the signal. Among these cross border radio broadcasts the Voice of America (VOA) Amharic service is the focus of this study.

This chapter will try to give an overview about the history of radio in general and international radio broadcast in particular. A brief history of radio broadcast in Ethiopia and conceptual background of international radio broadcasting.

2.2. Short History of Radio

Information is vital to the day to day activities of mankind the means of communication that present information about events around him and from far places is evolving through time to become very sophisticated. The effort to invent a new means to disseminate information in a short period of time continues unabated. Many inventors tried hard to contribute their part to the endeavour of mankind's lust to have a rapid means of communication.

The idea of communicating instantly with people at a distance has always appealed, and the electric telegraph made it possible in the mid nineteenth century. Until then messages could travel no faster than a horse on land or a sailing ship at sea. Admittedly there were a few semaphore telegraphs which could send a message from one station to another, provided it was not too far away and in the hours of daylight. The telegraph made it possible to send messages anywhere and at any time, but it depended on an insulated wire, expensive to install and easy to damage (Garratt, 2006:1).

Unlike most inventions those changed the life and history of mankind in many aspects radio broadcast was not the brain child of one person and not full-fledged one time invention. Rather it involved a number of people and pass through several ups and downs to become the popular means of mass communication.

Outstanding among them are the names of Faraday, Maxwell, Lodge and Hertz who prepared the ground for Marconi and for the practical development of what we now call 'Radio

Communication'. In essence, the early history of wireless telegraphy - or perhaps it would be more correct to call it the 'pre-history' - is the history of electromagnetic waves, the prediction of their existence by Faraday, the mathematical definition of the conditions for their propagation by Maxwell, and the eventual demonstration of their physical existence by Hertz with his experimental confirmation of the identity of their characteristics with those of visible light. And that is right to speak familiarly of electromagnetic waves perhaps without pausing to reflect that an electric wave can have no existence unless there is a corresponding magnetic wave, and that no electric current can flow without the creation of a magnetic field. Yet the knowledge of this inter-dependence of Faraday and Maxwell conceived the idea of electromagnetic waves; Hertz showed that they could be created and detected; Marconi began the task of harnessing them. Much has been written about Faraday and about Marconi. Radio from the time of Marconi onwards has also been the subject of many studies (Garratt, 2006:1).

Therefore, it can be said that the invention of radio is generally the outcome of a chain of prior developments which have been spread over a considerable period of time and to which a number of individuals have separately contributed. As Garratt (2006:1) reaffirms it, although there is a widespread belief that the invention of wireless telegraphy was the work of a young Italian, Guglielmo Marconi, and although it is perfectly true that the first patent ever to be granted for a system of wireless telegraphy stands in his name, the fact is that his achievement was only the practical application of scientific developments and discoveries which had been spread over a period of almost eighty years.

The search for wireless telephony and wireless telegraph led to advances by James Maxwell, Heinrich Hertz, Edouard Branly, and Oliver Lodge, culminating in Guglielmo Marconi's success around 1896. The "Father of Radio," Guglielmo Marconi, from Italy successfully transmitted across the English Channel in 1899 and across the Atlantic in 1901. Wireless was

now a reality. Marconi's wireless was in turn improved by Reginald Fessenden and Lee DeForest. At about the same time, sound recording was also being perfected. Broadcasting was firmly established into U.S. homes at the end of World War I (Baran, 1999, 180-82; Matelski, 2005).

Then radio became the major means of communication to the military and this opened the way to promote radio to the general use of communication. The idea of communicating instantly with people at a distance has always appealed, and radio broadcast begun reaching to the living rooms of people in different countries. But according to Bumpus and Skelt (1984: 7) the early broadcasts were made using the Morse code so they would only be understood by relatively few people.

Nevertheless, in the next few years the technological advance and invention of radio sets make radio broadcast accessible to a wide number of people. As McLeish (2005:1) put it, from its first tentative experiments and the early days of wireless, radio has expanded into an almost universal medium of communication. It leaps around the world on short waves linking the continents in a fraction of a second. It jumps to high satellites to put its footprint across a quarter of the globe. It brings the world to those who cannot read and helps maintain a contact for those who cannot see.

In this regard, radio became the major source of information and entertainment locally in countries that made use of it from the very beginning. But since radio waves do not recognize national frontiers, and behave in a manner that is not always predictable, most broadcasting is, in a sense, international. Somewhere, somehow, there will be listeners or eavesdroppers to any radio transmission (Bumpus and Skelt, 1984: 5).

These leads radio broadcasters to consider listeners who are far from their boundaries. This gives the beginning of international radio broadcasts by individual countries to achieve their

intended interest over the listeners who are living in other countries. For instance, Jerome (2008:9) stated that:

Many factors have prompted nations to become international broadcasters. The principal raison d'être of international broadcasting is to influence opinion makers, ordinary listeners. . . . International radio may serve as an official governmental voice and an arm of a country's foreign policy establishment; promote a nation's culture, tourism or commercial interests; educate and entertain; provide a link with expatriates abroad or at sea, or with the military; strengthen cultural ties with other nations; or satisfy national pride. It may promote, or combat, an ideology or a particular political viewpoint, or seek to save souls. And it may provide a valuable communications vehicle in times of crisis.

The realization of the potential radio broadcasting has in communicating messages to millions of people at a time with less cost attracted governments and other interested group to use it. Especially in Europe governments were the major operators of radio broadcast. They were in a ferrous competition to take the upper hand in every aspect of their activity against their rival.

2.3. International Radio Broadcasting

Following the discovery of radio broadcasting to disseminate homogenous message to mass audience the interest to exploit the new means of mass communication was very high. Governments were in the forefront to start broadcasting messages to their people via radio.

The first recorded use of radio for international broadcasting seems to have been in 1915 when Germany provides a daily news report transmission which were, it appears, widely heard, and used, by the press. Russia used radio, too, in 1917, to put over her policies and to explain to the world the facts behind the revolution. The first of the broadcasts, which was inspired by Lenin, began dramatically with words: 'to all, to all, to all', Russia also used to try and put pressure on Germany during the negotiations over the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. (Bumpus & Skelt, 1984:7)

Compering radio with other means of mass communication it has many comparative advantages to the broadcasters and to the audience. Among other things radio is the cheapest

in terms of capital cost and its running expenses. But as McLeish points out “broadcasters around the world have discovered, the main difficulty in setting up a station is often not financial, but lies in obtaining a transmission frequency (2005: 7, 8). It also does not require the education level of literacy.

Secondly, radio has no boundaries and creates connection among people with a number of differences.

Books and magazines can be stopped at national frontiers but radio is no respecter of territorial limits. Its signals clear mountain barriers and cross deep oceans. Radio can bring together those separated by geography or nationality – it can help to close other distances of culture, learning or status. The programs of political propagandists or of Christian missionaries can be sent in one country and heard in another. ... Crossing political boundaries, radio can bring freedoms to the oppressed and enlightenment to those in darkness (McLeish, 2005: 3-4)

Thirdly, radio is mobile and personal. The mobility of radio accounts in large part for its personal nature. Radio can be listened to alone, anywhere and at any time. It can be listened as an adjunct to other personal activities: one can listen at work, while exercising, while sitting in the sun. It travels in the car, and one can take it along in a Walkman. (Baran,1999:180; McLeish, 2005:3).

It was Lenin again who clearly perceived the potential of radio not only for domestic broadcasting in a country as vast as the Soviet Union, but also its international possibilities. Again he also urged Stalin, and the members of the political Bureau, to make money available from the gold fund for the furtherance of radio research. In accompanying memorandum he wrote: ‘I think from the stand point of propaganda and agitation, especially for those that are illiterate, and also for broadcasting lectures, it’s absolutely necessary to carry out this plan’ (Bumpus and Skelt, 1984:7)

There are varied historical accounts describing the early beginnings of international broadcasting. Wasburn (1992) suggested that Germany may have been the first country to use international radio broadcasting as early as 1915, when it established a regular radio news service that was accepted and used by multiple neutral countries in the region.

Bumpus and Skelt (1984:7) also supported the claim that these German broadcasts appeared to be the binger of international radio broadcast. In addition, these scholars also pointed to Russia's initial use of international radio broadcasting dating back to 1917 in its effort to "explain the facts behind the revolution" to the rest of the world.

"The Russians were the first to establish a government-sponsored, continuous, and extensive system of radio broadcasting, which revealed that such far-reaching systems were developed as a means of attaining significant political and economic goals" (Wasburn, 1992:1).

According to Wood (1992:36), it was the year 1927 that marked the birth of propaganda. Great Britain joined Russia and Germany, when it also discovered the use of radio waves as the "perfect medium for communicating with its far-flung colonies in the eastern and western hemispheres of the world".

Within the next few years, the Netherlands also began regular transmissions in Dutch to the East Indies, while France started French broadcasts to its colonies. By 1932, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Dutch colonial services developed into "major contemporary international broadcast organizations" (Wasburn, 1992, p.5).

On the other hand American companies such as Westinghouse and General Electric set up radio stations primarily to promote their consumer products. These companies were soon followed by large domestic broadcasting companies such as National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), while the U.S. government

"steered well clear of any involvement in international broadcasting" (Bumpus & Skelt, 1984:16).

Wood (1992) points out a dramatic turning point in the history of international broadcasting that took place in October 1935. Edward R. Murrow, a journalist and news broadcaster for CBS, attempted to cover a two-segment debate between Great Britain and Italy regarding Benito Mussolini's invasion into Ethiopia, a land where the British had strong vested interests. On the first night, CBS successfully transmitted the British perspective across the Atlantic Ocean via short wave radio transmitters, which proposed sanctions against the Italians.

However, the following night just as the Italian delegation was set to be aired in America, Murrow was informed that the short-wave link through London, controlled by the British Post Office refused permission for the broadcast and had pulled the plug on the circuit. This made front page headline, '51 nations vote for sanctions against Italy, Britain cuts off broadcast by Italians'. "International broadcasting and anti-broadcasting had arrived as a weapon of considerable effect for influencing the minds of listeners," (Wood, 1992, p.39).

When Adolph Hitler became the Chancellor of the National Socialist Government in Germany, he embraced the use of broadcasting as the "chief instrument of political propaganda" and reorganized its primarily domestic broadcasting arrangements to include overseas transmissions. By the end of 1935, Germany had successfully transmitted regular programs to Asia, Africa, South America and North America in German, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch (Bumpus and Skelt, 1984).

And gradually the radio medium took the centre stage as a means of mass communication crossing borders and reaching people who live across seas. In this regard governments were the major players in utilizing radio broadcast to influence their competitors. The Soviet

leaders, Germans and Italians tried their best to get across their ideological and political messages by using international radio broadcasts. Before, during and after the destructive Second World War, radio played a huge role in the propaganda and military field by all sides involved in it to achieve their dominance. Eventually, international radio broadcast became one weapon used to win the battle.

The most important and widely known radio broadcasters are the national broadcasting organizations which are usually state funded (and often state controlled) and which aim at audience in other countries. Many countries are involved in this activity. The widely known and listened international broadcasters are still on air; for instance, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and United States of America has the Voice of America, as the countries' main international broadcasters. There are also other international broadcasters like from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (Radio Moscow), Germany (DW), France (Radio France International) are some of them. There were also some private international and religious broadcasts, Bumpus and Skelt (1984:5).

2.4. Radio Broadcast in Ethiopia

Radio broadcasting in Ethiopia came into being during the restoration of Emperor Haile Sellasie I in 1941. However radio was introduced to Ethiopia in 1935 with a very limited transmission capacity. In the era of Italian aggression the station was wrecked by Ethiopian patriots to prevent its use by the fascist troops, nearing to arrive at Addis Ababa (Getachew, 2003: 564).

Soon after the Italian troops were driven out of Ethiopia the Press and Information Department of the Ministry of Pen repaired the old transmitting station. This transmitter was reinforced after a decade by a new installation of a 2.5 Kilowatt short-wave. Then beginning from early 1950s new radio equipment was installed at the premises of the Ministry of

Information in Addis Ababa. Public address systems were also installed in the central squares of the provincial towns, including: Asmara, Gonder, Dessie, Debre Marikos, Dire Dawa, Harar, Jimma, Lekemt Assela, Yirgalem and Mekele (Ministry of information, 1966: 18).

The modernization and expansion of Ethiopian broadcasting began in 1959 when the Ministry of Information was first formally budgeted. In 1960 two 10 KW short-wave transmitters were installed. The first Medium wave facility of the Ethiopian government, a 1 KW transmitter was installed in 1961, followed by its first high power radio facility in 1964. Meanwhile Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVOG) was established by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1963. It was one of the two modern and well established international missionary stations at that time. Yemisirach Dimts Radio was one of RVOG's radio programs for Ethiopian listeners. But following the 1974 Revolution, Derg confiscated Radio Voice of the Gospel station in 1977 and changed its name to *Voice of the Revolutionary Ethiopia*. After the fall of the Derg in 1991, the present government has given it the name *Radio Ethiopia* (Getachew, 2003: 566-67; Makuria, 2005: 10). It is now the dominant state radio station in Ethiopia.

In the subsequent years, Radio Ethiopia has undergone through different phases of development. These were gradually seen as hopeful signs of making radio the medium of the mass. Consequently, the capacity of the station was enhanced by building relay stations in different parts of the country. Furthermore, it increases the number of language the radio broadcast uses from time to time.

Television was first introduced in Ethiopia in 1963, on the occasion of the founding meeting of the Organization of African Union (OAU). But the regular television broadcasting was inaugurated in Ethiopia on November 2, 1964, on the Emperor Haile Sellasie I's 33rd anniversary of his coronation (Ministry of Information, 1966: 25). Then the introduction of

educational television in 1965 brought the most significant program change (Ministry of Information, 1966). There was only black and white transmission until the introduction of color television late in 1984 during the celebration of 10th anniversary of the Derg regime (Strategic Plan for Government Mass Media 2003-2005: 16). As the socialist government Derg did not open any door to promote private ownership or liberalizing media from government control. Therefore, all media survived as Derg's party mouthpiece under firm government control.

Following the change of government in 1991 new legislations were introduced to accommodate plural media outlets including radio broadcast in Ethiopia. The transitional government ratified a proclamation of the press freedom in 1992 that freed the print media from any censorship for the first time in the country's history. In addition to the 1992 Press Proclamation Article 19 of the 1995 Ethiopians' Constitution allows for private ownership of media. But practically the broadcast media deregulation delayed for many years before issuing licences for few private radio operators in the capital Addis Ababa. (Gebremedhin, 2006).

The government views radio as the most important mass medium in a large country like Ethiopia. Radio's strategic importance is also, some suspect, the reason behind the government's reluctance to allow private radio stations (Quick, Amanda C., 2003: 301). But a number of regional radio stations were established by regional and community radio stations established.

Compared with the size of its population the number of radio stations in Ethiopia is too few. But most people tune into radio to get news and information. A survey also affirms this by saying whilst the public receives information from a variety of sources a majority of 80.1% of respondents in the survey cite radio as their primary source for receiving news and

information, followed by television and then word of mouth from friends and family and community meetings (Ward, Ayalew, S., 2011:10).

Broadcasting, primarily the radio, reaches a much larger part of the population than does print, though Ethiopian radio is limited. As Quick (2003: 301-302) stated today there are a number of FM radio broadcasters in Addis Ababa. But there are only two national radio broadcasters in Addis. These are Radio Ethiopia and Radio Fana. The latter is associated with EPRDF, but is not directly government owned. There are also some regional broadcasting initiatives surfacing in different parts of the country.

Radio Ethiopia claims to have reached 50 percent of the landmass and 75 percent of the population with a good signal, making it the most influential news source in the country. However, frequency coverage does not reflect the station's actual availability to listeners, due to a lack of radio receivers.

2.5. Overview of Media in Imperial Ethiopia

After the Italian occupation Emperor Haile Silassie exerted a lot of effort to put in place new and modern system of administration in all aspects of the country. All the endeavours to modernize the country's infrastructures and administrations were under the strict control of the Emperor and his close aids. Similarly, as it was until recent times, Ethiopia's broadcasting was a government monopoly and serves the interest of the king and the royal family. Almost all the media outputs were centred on the day to day activities of the Emperor and illustrate and glorify as an infallible being.

During the imperial era it was unthinkable to report events and stories which were against the king and the royal family in particular and the system in general. The government controlled media didn't entertain any form of open criticism targeting the king. To make things worse, a list of issues were introduced to forbid the media not to report and this forbidden subjects

were known and approved by the Emperor himself (Barton, 1979: 218.). These off limit areas to report were:

Writing or reporting which has libellous accusation or defaming the royal family and foreign head of state. Other restrictions disallowed pronouncements against the imperial government and the Constitution; a show of disrespect for government officials (ministers); any reference to unemployment, disputes between labour and management, student uprisings, religious and ethnic differences, the increase in prostitution, and the number of beggars; any comment on the government budget; writing obscenities; any writing that undermined Ethiopia's unity or that might affect African unity; criticizing the policies of other countries; land tenure; complaints by government employees; tax increases; inflation; comparing Ethiopia's living standard with other countries; propagating the social philosophy or ideology of other countries; and finally, reporting on parliamentary debates. In addition to the above restrictions, the media had to be careful about criticizing the U.S. government, as it was an ally of Ethiopia (Getachew, 2003: 566).

Practically this list put everything that is the topic and concern of the media activities and the public during the era of the Emperor forbidden from being the subject. The spread of communism was also the concern of the Ethiopian government as it was for west. To protect the power of the king in all aspects of the country's life, the media was highly restricted to speak about other forms of government and political philosophy or ideology. To assert its strong relationship with the US government the list included to treat issues of US and its citizen carefully.

All these were the indications for the restriction of all sorts of information which were other than the Imperial Government's version. And this led to the conclusion that the media activities during that time were fully controlled and one sided. And the public had no chance

to get a wider variety of information without restriction from local media outlets. Since Ethiopia was a close ally to the US government it had no interest to broadcast alternative source information to Ethiopia by using the Voice of America (VOA). Rather there were some clues that station was working as a partner in producing friendly contents to the Ethiopian audience.

2.6. Ethio-US Relationship

Ethiopia and the United States have a long history of relation. In modern times the two countries nurtured their relationship in different fields of cooperation. Ethiopia and US relationship is based not only on the consideration of geopolitics but also on economic and social factors. Ethiopia attracts potential investors because it has one of the largest populations in Africa. US foreign policy makers also consider Ethiopia's demography and potential for rewarding investors, given a favourable political environment and conducive policy.

Besides the potential advantages that Ethiopia offers, it has a unique historical and geographical position in Africa as an independent country and for its proximity to the Middle East. Ethiopia does not have a European colonial legacy and does not come under any European country's sphere of influence. This lack of political entanglement helped make Ethiopia attractive to the US during the Cold War. Ethiopia was a safe area for the US and its leader, Emperor Haile Selassie, was a staunch US ally. Ethiopia supported the US not only on the diplomatic front at international organizations such as the UN, by voting along US lines, but also by dispatching its military, the Kagnew battalion, to Korea under the UN flag and US command in 1951. (Getachew, 2009:45)

The relationship between the Royal Ethiopia and the United States of America was very warm when there was ideological rivalry between the US and the USSR during the cold war. While the super powers' rivalry took root in the newly independent developing countries, Ethiopia once again needed a dependable ally to help her develop her economy and protect her sovereignty. Emperor Haile Selassie had a great interest to strengthen a close relationship with the US because he believed that the US, unlike most European countries, had no

colonial aspirations. And while the Cold War was in progress, Ethio–US relations were enhanced considerably (ibid:41).

As Addis Ababa increasingly became a diplomatic seat for Africa in general, Ethiopia's geographic location in particular made it even more attractive to the US geopolitical strategists because Ethiopia controlled the long Red Sea coast that leads to Suez Canal. And the US Naval Communications Unit operation at Kagnaw Station in Asmara, the then northern Ethiopia gives the two countries relation much more strength.

When the Cold War competition between the Super powers manifested in different forms in different parts of the world, Africa was also in the centre of their interest to influence and bring into their respective ideological folds. In 1974 conditions in Ethiopia were ready for government change and calls for reform remained unanswered by the monarchy. The aging Emperor Haile Selassie, who was on the throne for more than four decades, made his last visit to the US in a year before he was overthrown from power and explained to the Nixon Administration that Somalia, a close ally and armed by the USSR, was planning to attack Ethiopia. At that time Somalia had a territorial claim on the eastern part of Ethiopia and with the help of USSR there was an imminent threat of aggression. To avert this threat and to put Ethiopian army in the same position in terms of armaments the Emperor requested improved US weapons help. But the response from the US administration was not positive and this led him to look for other alternative. Then the Emperor knocked Moscow's door, the arch rival of US, to get weapons to his army.

But the simmering movement for change from different parts of Ethiopian society went out of control of the Imperial system. Eventually the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army, known as the *Derg*, took control of power, overthrowing the

Emperor. Then the military committee took an anti-US stance and allied itself to the USSR to get ideological and military support.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

Since this study deals with the history and role of an international radio broadcast, VOA, owned by the government of the United States of America to promote and protect its interest in a targeted countries. This has a greater connection to the political and economic interests the sponsoring body in one way or another.

In the political economy of the media perspective ownership has a greater role to influence media contents to the ideological and economic ends of the owners. In a capitalist system private ownership of property and the political involvement of the wealthy creates a strong bond with the system they operate. This builds a sense of responsibility to protect the system that nurture and safeguard their property and interest. Particularly, the expansion of communism was the greatest threat. This ideological competition can be witnessed openly on the media to protect the political or economic control of the elite and/or powerful governments. This way of media control could overlook the interest of the audience to satisfy the wishes of the owners.

... the media are ... part of an ideological arena in which various class views are fought out, although within the context of the dominance of certain classes; ultimate control is increasingly concentrated in monopoly capital; media professionals, while enjoying the illusion of autonomy, are socialized into and internalize the norms of the dominant culture; the media, taken as a whole, relate interpretive frameworks consonant with the interests of the dominant classes, and media audiences, while sometimes negotiating and contesting these frameworks, lack ready access to alternative meaning systems that would enable them to reject the definitions offered by the media in favour of consistently oppositional definitions (Gurevitch et al. 1982:2).

So looking this topic from the perspective of political economy of the media gives an appropriate meaning to the study. Political economy is the study and use of how economic

theory and methods influences political ideology. Political economy is the interplay between economics, law and politics, and how institutions develop in different social and economic systems, such as capitalism, socialism and communism. Political economy also involves the use of resources and power to determine which courses of action will give the most beneficial results, and what the probability of those results being reached are (www.investopedia.com).

Political economy theorists study elite control of economic institutions, such as banks and stock markets, and then try to show how this control affects many other social institutions, including the mass media. In certain respects, political economists accept the classic Marxist assumption that the base dominates the superstructure. They investigate the means of production by looking at economic institutions, expecting to find that these institutions shape media to suit their interests and purposes (Baran and Davis, 2012:223).

This indicates that the media institutions and the content they deal with are influenced in favour of the few elites who control the media institutions. Besides, the owners' (Governments or individuals), influence the doors of the media is wide open to additional factors that let in pressure from the side of major funding sources (advertisers), and mutual interests and relationships between the media and those who make the news and have the power to define it and explain what it means. Particularly political interest has tremendous influence.

As Williams (2003:10) put it, the reproduction of ideology has to be seen within the context of the means of *production* of media organisations. However, the role of media organisations, personnel and practices in shaping the output of the media has been an important part of the field. Political economy theorists have stressed the role of ownership and control of the media and its ties to the established power structures of society, and the related issues of the role of the market in determining the nature of media production. The relationship between

ownership and control has been a contested part of the discussion of political economy. Others located their discussion of media production in the context of the internal processes of media organisations and the occupational cultures of media workers.

The major proponents of the political economy of media theory, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, discussed the issue widely in their book 'Manufacturing Consent, The Political Economy of the Mass Media'. The political economy approach concentrated upon the issues of media ownership and control and was initially concerned with media effects. Then these two scholars focused upon media behaviour rather than media effects, hence on the Propaganda Model.

They said that the mass media serves as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda (Herman and Chomsky 1988:1).

A propaganda model gives more emphasis to the disparity of resource and power. This leads to affect the mass-media interests and choices in different level. This came from the practice that the wealthy and powerful exercise to select contents to the media outlets that favour to their interest. In this case governments and private individuals dominate the mass media outputs to disseminate their version of news and message to the audience.

The major components of the propaganda model, as Herman and Chomsky (1998:2) put it news "filters," fall under the following headings:

- (1) The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- (2) Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- (3) The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- (4) "Flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
- (5) "Anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism.

These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns.

In this regard, media owners, whether governments or private individuals, put their firm control to promote their interest and profit by using the media outlet at their hand. Since, the broadcasting of Voice of America (VOA) radio service has got much attention during the cold war ideological competition of the east and the west in general and the beginning of the Amharic service in particular have a strong link to the effort of the West to contain the spread of communism to other countries.

Though these filters are complimentary to one another, for the purpose of this particular study the anticommunism filter is well fitted one. After the end of the Second World War the expanding communist ideology was the major concern to the capitalist system in the west. Governments and owners of media outlets were in the forefront to fight the spread of communist ideology within and beyond their territory.

Communism as the ultimate evil has always been the spectre haunting property owners, as it threatens the very root of their class position and superior status. The Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions were traumas to Western elites, and the ongoing conflicts and the well-publicized abuses of Communist states have contributed to elevating opposition to communism to a first principle of Western ideology and politics. This ideology helps mobilize the populace against an enemy, and because the concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests or support accommodation with Communist states and radicalism. It therefore helps fragment the left and labor movements and serves as a political-control mechanism. If the triumph of communism is the worst imaginable result, the support of fascism abroad is justified as a lesser evil (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:29).

The anti-Communist sentiment at the height of the cold war went high in the west even among the political elites who involve in different political parties. To take a softer stand towards communists leads to be accused of being pro-Communist or insufficiently anti-Communist, are kept continuously on the defensive in a cultural milieu in which anticommunism is the dominant religion. For the politicians all the communist ideas and inclinations were taboos that cost them dearly in their political activities. In this regard the owners and the gate keepers of the media play a major role.

The anti-Communist control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media. In normal times as well as in periods of Red scares, issues tend to be framed in terms of a dichotomized world of Communist and anti-Communist powers, with gains and losses allocated to contesting sides, and rooting for "our side" considered an entirely legitimate news practice. It is the mass media that identify, create, and push into the limelight The ideology and religion of anticommunism is a potent filter (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:30).

All in all, the five filters tighten the noose to news that related to the communist ideology to reach the audience. Therefore, as Herman and Chomsky (1988:31) stated by definition, news from primary establishment sources meets one major filter requirement and is readily accommodated by the mass media. Messages from and about dissidents and weak, unorganized individuals and groups, domestic and foreign, are at an initial disadvantage in sourcing *costs* and credibility, and they often do not comport with the ideology or interests of the gatekeepers and other powerful parties that influence the filtering process.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The objective of this study is to examine the Voice of America (VOA) Amharic service history and the role as a means of alternative information source to its audience in Ethiopia. To this end, the study primarily focuses on the historical base that leads to the realization of the radio broadcast to Ethiopia and its activities starting from its establishment to date. The study examines VOA Amharic broadcast history and its role in the past three decades.

In exploring the history and the role of this international radio broadcaster, it is vital to look for reliable and factual information. Therefore, the study employed a qualitative methodology and document analysis. As Lavrakas (2008:729) stated qualitative research is inductive and context-specific research that focuses on observing and describing a specific phenomenon, behaviour, opinions, and events. The goals of qualitative research are to provide a detailed narrative description and holistic interpretation that captures the richness and complexity of behaviours, experiences, and events in natural settings based on data collected by observations, documents, physical artefacts, interviews, and focus groups.

The study specifically uses historical documents, in-depth interviews, and other electronic documents to answer the research questions. Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources.

Historical research is a systematic process for searching, exploring, summarizing, and reporting past information and events using primary and secondary sources of historical data to gain understanding of historical events, issues, and policies. Primary sources of historical data are the original first hand artefacts, documents, observations, oral presentations, diaries, photographs, and audio-visual recordings of past events. Secondary sources are second hand non direct oral and written documentations of past events that are summarized and documented by others and not the original primary sources (Lavrakas, 2008: 730).

Since this study is interested more about the history and the role of VOA Amharic service it tried to collect the necessary information on the subject available in different forms. In this regard the major sources of information are people who have first-hand knowledge about the topic and also others who know the issue indirectly. Therefore, the primary sources of information for this study are interviews with former and present staff of the Voice of America Amharic service and historical documents, media scholars, politicians, journalists, previous researches and reports. Consequently, the qualitative research approach is employed to gather and analyse the information.

3.2. Research Design

Research design is the structure of any scientific work. It gives direction and systematizes the research. The method you choose will affect your results and how you conclude the findings (Abiy et al, 2009:93). The exploration about VOA's Amharic service history and role employed the descriptive research design. It sets out to describe and to interpret what is. It looks at individuals, groups, institutions, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyse and interpret the entities and the events that constitute the various fields of inquiry. It aims to describe the state of affairs as it exists (ibid, 2009:29). It is an important component to assert the validity of the research. As Miller and Brewer (2003: 262) defined, research design is a model used by the researcher to discharge 'the burden of proof' of the logical organisation that allows him or her to feel that whatever they have done in their research allows them to reach valid conclusions.

Taking the Voice of America Amharic service as a case from the vast broadcasting activity of this international broadcaster, the study looks into its history and role by taking an in-depth examination and intensive description of a single organization based on collected information from a variety of sources, such as interviews, documents analysis, sample radio programs and other archival records.

Since the main objective of this study is to explore historical background and examine the role played by VOA Amharic service radio broadcast as an alternative source of information to the Ethiopian audience. It explores and describes the way it passes through different stages and the activities it has been carrying out in the past and at present. It describes the status of the radio broadcast. And this can help to understand the topic and lead to causal analysis.

Descriptive research designs aim to answer research questions about the current state of affairs, identify factors and relationships among them, and create a detailed description of phenomena. Thus, it provides a snapshot of the feelings, opinions, practices, thoughts, preferences, attitudes, or behaviours of a sample of people, as they exist at a given time and a given place (Lavrakas, 2008: 728).

Therefore this research deals with the history and role of the particular radio broadcast, and it tried to explore to understand the reason to its establishment and the major events that marks in its existence. Furthermore, the contribution of the broadcast service through the eyes and experiences of different people shades a light to know more about it.

3.3. Data Source

The major focus of this study is to understand the history and role of the Voice of America Amharic service radio broadcast while serving as an alternative source of information. Therefore, the majority of the data collected from documentary sources, key informants (former and present employees of the radio station, media professionals who monitor the radio broadcast and can speak about the stations role as an alternative source of information, scholars, politicians), media reports, secondary sources and sample programs of the radio broadcast to analyze its content and current program schedule.

From the documentary sources, the study tried to find out a recorded history of VOA Amharic radio broadcast from its beginning to the present day. As Denscombe (2007:227) pointed out, documents can be treated as a source of data in their own right. The documentary

sources are written sources. There are, though, alternative types of documents for research, which take the form of visual sources (pictures, artefacts) and even sounds (music).

As indicated, the second sources of information are key informants. These key informants are people who know about the VOA Amharic service directly and indirectly. Key informant refers to the person with whom an interview about a particular organization, social program, problem, or interest group is conducted. In a sense, the key informant is a proxy for her or his associates at the organization or group. Key informants are people who are most knowledgeable of the organization or issue. Key informants are chosen not because they are in any way representative of the general population that may be affected by whatever issue is being studied, but because they are believed to have the most knowledge of the subject matter (Lavrakas, 2008).

Since there is a limited chance in the side of the general public to know about certain organizations' history, internal structure and activities in detail, there is no a need to bother about on the issue of representativeness to the general public. But while the selection of key informants is not random, it is important that there be a mix of persons interviewed, reflecting all possible sides of the issue at study (ibid).

This study is not limited to the past history of the Voice of America Amharic service, but it also describes its present operation. On the bases of its history it's possible to examine and understand the current activities. In addition, through the historic spectacles one can explore the role the radio broadcast plays as a source of information. As James W. Cary (1989) describes "qualitative studies differ from historical work in one critical way. They are concerned not only with the explanation of past events but with contemporary phenomena as well. Qualitative studies emulate historical explanation as method, not history as subject."

The study tried to look in to the historical approach of qualitative research and discuss about why this methodology is employed. Then it gives the justification about the processes of data gathering. Furthermore, it explained the way the study tries to use historical documents as sources data, and then the way individual in-depth interviews and analysis of sample programs presented.

3.4. Historical Approaches of Qualitative Research

Since every present phenomenon is a result of past endeavours that proceed to the time at hand, it's very important to look back to understand the situation fully to move forward. As a result, history has an indispensable place to unlock the present facts in a way past activities are the part of the current developed.

. . . Much of the present is the product of the past, the outcome of previous actions, activities and even accidents. In short, rather than being distant, dead and gone, much of the past remains around us, alive and well. Therefore many current social phenomena are ineradicably historical in character: they frequently bear the marks of their origins, and require that they be understood in historical terms. Historical research may be conducted as a research aims to identify, uncover and analyse the 'origins', 'sources', 'foundations' and 'causes' of current social phenomena. (Miller and Brewer, 2003: 142)

Every activity or event leaves behind its footprint to the new comers who are following on the track of every field of human involvement. In this regard, the operation of media has also its own history that plays an important role in the continuation of the work in an improved and modern way. Therefore, the study of media history is vital in the understanding of, people and their societies. Through the study of the past, it's possible understand what and why things happened. In the same way, as individual people need memory to shape identity and plan for the future, communities need history to give dimension and meaning to the present. Without an understanding of the past, the present doesn't make much sense. As Bohan writes "History can broaden one's horizons and open the doors to endless possibilities. The study of history can not only enlighten the mind, but it can prove instrumental in

preventing the repeat of past mistakes. Without history, there can be no future (www.123HelpMe.com/view.asp?id=148925).

As part of social science media activities has a greater role in the day today life of mankind in the activities and thinking of individuals. Therefore, we should give a rightful place in studying the history to understand its development. As Jensen and Jankowski (1991:176) indicated, there are three sorts of communication history study types. These are macro-history, history proper and institutional history. For the sake of this research, the last one has been selected.

Institutional history considers the development of the media—in the sense primarily of media institutions, but also the history of language, the history of a particular genre for their own sake. It asks the question: how has this (or that) institution of mass communication developed? It is primarily interested in social forces outside the media institution or industry under study only as they affect that institution or industry; any impact of the institution or industry on society is generally taken for granted, not investigated. Institutional histories of communication are, of course, legion (ibid).

As discussed earlier, this study employed historical approach which includes the domain of qualitative research method and particularly follows the way of institutional history study. In this regard, the Voice of America Amharic service history dealt with from the point of view of this approach. To this end, available documents and informants within and outside of the radio station used to collect relevant data.

Since the main goal of this research is to explore the ups and downs of VOA Amharic radio broadcast from its establishment to date, the institutional history approach may be well suited to carry out the study. In fact, history is not simply the study of the past; it also requires descriptive and explanatory schemes. Historians working in this vein reject the possibility of an objective historical truth that can be uncovered empirically, asserting instead that there are multiple truths and ways of interpreting and representing a historical phenomenon that are

perspectively situated and influenced by socio political power structures (Lavrakas, 2008:402). Although historical research is incomplete, it can be considered as an empirical study. In fact, all researches whether they are historical or scientific they have their own limitations. But the study tried to shade light on basic information about the radio broadcast. So, this study predominantly employed documentary sources and in depth interview to explore the history of the Voice of America Amharic service.

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

The research is an attempt to highlight the history and role of the Voice of America Amharic Service in the past more than three decades of broadcast activities to the Ethiopian audience. The document sources were obtained from different libraries and other electronic sources. People who were working and still working for the radio station were contacted either in person or in other means of communication. Secondary sources that know well about the radio station's history and work also contacted in different ways. In depth in interview were employed as a tool to extract all information they have. And personal interviews were conducted with the available informants about the radio broadcast. The interview schedule and place were arranged as per the convenience of the informants. All interviews were tape-recorded. And all other means of communications are kept as a record in a way suitable to refer back when needed. This research looks the overall history and role of the Voice of America Amharic service form historical analysis point of view. Therefore, consultation of secondary data such as the use of historical and other documents, and individual in-depth interviews has been very vital in exploring the historical side of the equation in this research.

3.6. Historical and other Documents

As mentioned earlier, historical analysis is the major approach this study employ to describe and explore to give explanation to the research questions raised. Therefore, documentary and key informant data are the most readily available approaches to understand the history and

role of the VOA Amharic radio broadcast. So looking back the history and examining the track the station passed through can help know it well. And the review of the VOA Amharic service has mainly depended on historical data sources and people who have the knowledge directly or indirectly. But there are limitations that challenged the study's completeness in the process and the nature of the study topic's accessibility. Since VOA Amharic service radio broadcast is an international radio broadcast from other corner of the world it's very difficult to closely study it. And all of the founders and key players in the early days of the radio broadcast are living in the US which makes to approach them very difficult. But the researcher tried hard to contact them but they are not willing to respond to questions for this study without giving any reason to it.

Though there are few books and research works available on the general Voices of America history and activities but let alone books and research works it's difficult to find articles about VOA Amharic service. So it was a very hard undertaking to study about the history of the Amharic service. But I hope this study will pave the way for further researches by serving as a spring board.

3.7. Sampling Technique

As mentioned earlier qualitative approach is the method to explore and understand the history of VOA Amharic radio broadcast. Since it's difficult to find and handle a large number of informants to the research, it is necessary to select a type of sample that eases the burden. Sampling is the process of selecting a number of study units from a defined study population. Often research focuses on a large population that, for practical reasons, it is only possible to include some of its members in the investigation. You then have to draw a sample from the total population (Zegeye & et al, 2009:61).

Therefore, to collect the relevant data respondents were selected purposefully to get the relevant persons and information. Consequently, the study employed purposive and snowball sampling as appropriate sampling techniques. Purposive sampling, as the name suggests, was done with a purpose, which means that selection of sampling units is purposive in nature. Purposive sampling is also referred to as judgmental sampling or expert sampling. The main objective of purposive sampling is to produce a sample that can be considered “representative” of the population. The selection of a purposive sample is often accomplished by applying expert knowledge of the population to select in a non-random manner a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population (Lavrakas, 2008). Similarly Snowball sampling is generally used in the case of explorative research study/design, where researchers do not have much lead information. It starts by identifying respondents who meet the criteria for selection/inclusion in the study and can give lead for another set of respondents/information to move further in the study. Snowball sampling is especially useful when you are trying to reach populations that are inaccessible or difficult to find (Singh, 2007).

3.8. Semi-Structured Interviews

The technique employed to collect data from informants was semi-structured interview. It gives to the interviewee a space to speak important points going back and forth, and also gives a chance to restructure the questions according to the informant’s knowledge and ability of sharing information for the interviewer. The interviewer is therefore able to adapt the research instrument to the individuality of the research respondent. While semi-structured interviews contain a set of specific topics, interviewees are allowed sufficient freedom to digress. Questions are generally open-ended in order to gain richer information about attitudes and behaviour. The format is therefore mainly discursive, allowing the respondent to

develop their answers in their own terms and at their own length and depth (Miller and Brewer, 2003: 167).

3.9. Individual In-depth Interview

For this study the preferred tool of data collection is individual in depth interview from different sources using various research techniques to make the research as complete as possible. One of the advantages of in-depth interview is that it provides wealth and detail information (Babbie and Mcuton, 2005). In-depth interviews are important to let people to talk about their personal take on, and experiences on the topic of the research. So the research has employed in-depth interviews with people who know the Voice of America Amharic broadcast directly or indirectly. And the interview was conducted in a formal way.

To make the research as complete as possible I have tried to contact the founding staffs of the radio broadcast in different ways but only one of them was willing to share all the information he know. The other were openly and tacitly declined to involve in the research. But the research tried all its best to fill the gaps through other informants and documentary sources.

For this research a total of ten informants were selected as a key informant in purposive and snowball ways from former and present workers of the Voice of America Amharic service and other participants who know about the radio broadcast. The selection was on the bases of their knowledge and experience about the particular radio broadcast and their willingness to take part in the research. Semi-structured interview procedures were employed for each interviewee for the in-depth interviews. Apart from the informants who are living abroad, the interview schedule and place were arranged as per the convenience of the informant. Participants from abroad mainly respond to the initial and follow up questions via email but

there occasional phone calls to make some points clear. All interviews are tape-recorded and the email correspondents also kept for the record.

A wide range of questions were designed for each informant according to the knowledge and closeness to the research topic. As mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews were conducted with most of the participants. As much as possible the language and the questions were simple and precise. And most of the questions were open ended to tap more information from the respondents'. As Miller and Brewer stated (250:2003) stated open-ended questions give the respondents the opportunity to give an answer to the question in their own words. Open-ended questions have an advantage in that they allow for elaboration in a response and so can provide insights into the meanings which respondents attach to their actions and beliefs.

3.10. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Since the Voice of America Amharic Service has been on air for more than three decades transmitting alternative messages to the Ethiopia audience, it's necessary to examine and understand the history and role it played. The history of VOA in general and the broadcast service to Ethiopia in particular and its role analysed on the bases of the media theoretical perspective and the issue of ownership, their objectives, major areas of focus and etc...

At the time of this particular radio station started broadcasting, the influence of ideology in the content of the broadcast, their message and the goal to be achieved through this radio broadcast were examined. All data obtained from interview will be tape recorded and transcribed according to the importance to the research and presented and analysed in line with the relevant theoretical perspective.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. VOA Amharic Service History and Role

4.1. Introduction

International broadcasters have their own reasons to reach out to an audience in other countries. The major reason may be for ideological, or propaganda purpose. International radio broadcast gives a chance to promote the ideology of a nation the broadcaster serves. In this case, the radio broadcasts play an important role in advancing the owner countries' foreign policy interests and agendas on international affairs or events that have global influence (Wood, J. 1992).

Among others Voice of America (VOA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and the undercover CIA-backed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty during the Cold War the major radio broadcasters from the west. The rival radio broadcasts from the East were the Soviet Union's Radio Moscow and the Chinese Radio Peking.

In light of the competition to dominate over rival ideology the east and the west tried to exploit the potential of radio broadcasting. This chapter explores the history of VOA in general and its Amharic service in particular, and its role as an alternative source of information to its audience in Ethiopia. To understand the history and the role of VOA Amharic radio broadcast documentary analysis in depth interviews are employed.

4.2. A Short History of VOA

In the ideological rivalry between the East and the West, the Voice of America was the major player in the international radio broadcasting arena. The Voice of America started its official broadcast on February 1, 1942, around two months following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that dragged the United States into WWII. With Japan's attack Germany declares war against the United States. The first broadcast was directed to Europe using BBC transmitters

in the continent. The first VOA broadcasts were produced in rented studios in New York. This gave America a means to reach people beyond its borders. But in 1941, before U.S. joined the battle in WWII, President Roosevelt, driven by his belief in the power of ideas and the need to communicate America's views abroad established the U.S. Foreign Information Service (FIS).

As the Second World War ends by the victory of allied forces, many of VOA's broadcast services were reduced or eliminated. In late 1945, VOA was transferred to the Department of State. By April 1946, VOA had lost nearly two-thirds of its broadcasting staff, and broadcasting was cut from over forty to twenty-three languages. Congress reluctantly appropriated funds for their continued operation in 1946 and 1947. But there was a little interest to strengthen the radio broadcast. The reluctant support for international broadcasting disappeared with the escalation of the Cold War and hostile international broadcasting by the Soviet bloc and the Berlin Blockade in 1948. The enactment of the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act authorized the secretary of state to provide information about the United States.

During the Cold War, most U.S. government officials were not clear about the role of VOA's broadcast across borders. Some consider it as a means of reporting news and reflect America's reality to people far away; others also believe that the radio broadcast is a tool of U.S. foreign policy and a "weapon" against the Soviet Union. But the US Congress saw it increasingly as an instrument of propaganda against its rival super power. And as the 1970s came to an end, the gap between VOA's extensive programming requirements and the level of funding had led to staff shortages and a lack of adequate production and transmission facilities.

To restructure and improve the communication activities of US government, a commission appointed by President Eisenhower had begun a review of U.S. foreign information activities, including the Voice of America. And the commission recommended that these programs should be separated from the Department of State. Then the United States Information Agency (USIA) was established, and under it VOA became its single largest element.

Voice of America (VOA) is the official external broadcast institution of the US government. It is one of five civilian U.S. international broadcasters working under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governance (BBG). VOA provides programming for broadcast on radio, television and the internet outside of the U.S., in 43 languages. VOA produces about 1,500 hours of news and feature programming each week for an estimated global audience of 123 million people, "to promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding through multimedia communication of accurate, objective, and balanced news, information and other programming about America and the world to audiences overseas." Its day-to-day operations are supported by the International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB).

A 1976 law signed by President Gerald Ford requires VOA to "serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news." The VOA Charter states: "VOA news will be accurate, objective and comprehensive." VOA radio and television broadcasts are distributed by satellite, cable and on FM, AM, and Shortwave radio frequencies. They are streamed on individual language service websites, social media sites and mobile platforms. VOA has more than 1,200 affiliate and contract agreements with radio and television stations and cable networks worldwide.

4.3. The VOA Charter

Under the Eisenhower administration in 1959, VOA Director Harry Loomis commissioned a formal statement of principles to protect the integrity of VOA programming and define the

organization's mission, and was issued by Director George V. Allen as a directive in 1960 and was endorsed in 1962 by USIA director Edward R. Murrow. On July 12, 1976, the principles were signed into law on July 12, 1976, by President Gerald Ford. It reads:

The long-range interests of the United States are served by communicating directly with the peoples of the world by radio. To be effective, the Voice of America must win the attention and respect of listeners. These principles will therefore govern Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts.

1. VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive.
2. VOA will represent America, not any single segment of American society, and will therefore, present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions.
3. VOA will present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on these policies.

News-gathering resources were increased, making possible more live, on-the-scene reporting. In 1969, when Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, 450 million people were tuned to the Voice or to the hundreds of stations around the world that were relaying VOA's live coverage, the largest audience in radio history. VOA dramatically enhanced its credibility through its straightforward reporting of two events that traumatized the nation — the war in Vietnam and the constitutional crisis posed by Watergate. And within a few years' time the VOA's broadcasting expanded into different parts of the world and increased the number of broadcast languages and hours per week (http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2009/1012/fsl/roberts_voice.html).

4.4. Ethiopia and VOA

During the Emperor period, the relation between Ethiopia and United States were very cordial and warm in different sectors. The US support to Ethiopia was very important during the rebuilding of various institutions after the end of Italian occupation. In the field of education, infrastructure development, military, agriculture etc the US support was clearly visible. But in the field of media works, it was not that much strong because Ethiopia was an ally of the US.

In terms of VOA's operation in the course of the Emperor's era, there was no clearly visible activity that targets the Ethiopian audience from the Washington DC. But there are some clues that VOA Amharic foundation was laid during the Emperor time. In this case, VOA was producing Amharic programs in Washington that mainly focused on promoting America and its system of government, History, Science and technology and other feature programs which put Ethiopia and the Emperor in a good light (*interviewee B, Personal interview, 14th April 2014*).

Though it is difficult to find documents and identify the exact time this programs started and continued, some people remotely remember they have listened to these programs on Radio Ethiopia. As some of the informants put it, the programs were produced in Amharic at the VOA studio in Washington and sent to Ethiopian radio to broadcast to the radio station's listeners. The recorded programs most of the time didn't have any news item rather than the soft subjects. But sometimes it had reportage about the Emperor's major international activities like his visit to western countries and other activities that built his influence among listeners (*personal interview, Mairegu 2nd April, Gesit 11th April and interviewee B, 14th April 2014*).

These programs were produced by journalists who were working for the Ethiopian Radio. These producers and presenters were participants of a field service which was offered to professionals in different fields. This is a kind of exchange program for Ethiopian radio staff to the VOA head quarter to learn the working situation of the radio station. And in the process they produce the programs in Amharic which has an ending that mention the presenter's name, the stations identity (VOA) and the place where the program was produced and presented (Washington DC).

The producers and presenters remembered by all of the informants were Ato Asefa Yirgu and Ato Teshome Wagaw (now PhD). Ato Asefa Yirgu was a veteran radio journalist at radio Ethiopia with an authoritative voice. Later on he was very much known for his readings of proclamations and public announcement at the abysmal period of the military regime. His style of reading and influential voice was unique and had many admirers. And this made him the first choice of the leaders of the military regime to read their consecutive announcements. Later on Ato Asefa Yirgu became the only reader of the military government proclamations. Consequently, he acquired a name by his colleagues called as 'Voice of the revolution'. Beside the admiration, Ato Asefa has been misunderstood by many, and some thought he was behind the terrible proclamations during the Derg regime and those announcements which included the decision to execute high officials of the Emperor and people who were labelled by the military regime as 'Anti-Revolution', 'Anti-people'. . . (*Mairegu, personal interview, 2nd April 2014*).

The other journalist who produced and presents Amharic radio programs in Washington DC for the radio Ethiopia in collaboration with VOA was Ato Teshome Wagaw. Since he continued to live in the US when the military regime took power back at home, little is known about this journalist. Though a repeated effort to contact him couldn't bear fruit, two

of the informants indicated that Ato Teshome Wagaw is now a successful academician in the US Universities and he is a PhD holder.

VOA's first Amharic content which was produced and recorded on tape in Washington and sent to Addis Ababa to be broadcasted on Ethiopian radio and can be considered as the early effort of the radio station in starting radio broadcast to Ethiopia (*interviewee C, personal interview, 28th April 2014*). The program was on air once in a week alongside the programs of Ethiopian radio. All the materials were very friendly to the system because the king was a close ally and ideology supporter of the US system during the cold war. But a few years prior to the fall of the Emperor this Amharic radio program from VOA stopped for unknown reason. And that was the end of the relationship between the Ethiopian audiences (via Ethiopian radio) with the Voice of America (*Personal interview Mairegu 2nd April, Gesit 11th April and interviewee B 14th April 2014*).

4.5. Fall of the Imperial Government

Because Haile Sellasie I couldn't implement a reform in all aspects of his feudal administration that could change the miserable life of the peasant and the urban poor, the mounting grievance was reaching its pick. The drought and the following famine in the northern parts of the country triggered political unrest in the urban centres. Then the major activists of the reform against the king; students, workers, peasants and the army rose against him.

From January 1974 strikes, mutinies and demonstrations began challenging the government. In the following six months, political initiative was gradually taken by an armed forces committee known as the Derg. By July, the government couldn't prevent the arrest of its ministers. Finally, on 12th September 1974, Haile Sellasie – whose eightieth birthday had been celebrated two years earlier – was dethroned and taken prisoner by junior military

officers. The military dictatorship gradually took power and controlled the government. The emperor and several members of the Imperial family were imprisoned but others went into exile. Finally Haile Sellasie was assassinated in August 1975. The army group of junior military officers (Derg) took full advantage and assumed power and initiated a 17-year period of military rule under the leadership of Mengistu Hailemariam (Bahru 2002: 236-7).

This brought the warm relationship of the Ethiopian government with the US counterpart to an end. Within a short period of time the provisional military council (Derg) turned its face to the USSR in search of ideological ally, as a result the communist super power took the place of its western rival in the strategic horn of Africa. The US was forced to leave its strong hold in Ethiopia's military, economic, education institutions which it involved in for decades.

Following the removal of the king the instable Ethiopia was vulnerable to the aggression of the neighbouring Somalia. Then when Somalia attacked Ethiopia (1977–1978), the Carter administration, which was unhappy about the revolutionary reform in Ethiopia banned arms sales to Ethiopia on the bases of human rights violation. But the Carter Administration announced its willingness to supply arms to Somalia even though Somalia was the clear aggressor. After these events, the relationship between the two countries was ruined.

The foreign policy followed by the Carter Administration did not, however, deter human rights violations in Ethiopia. Rather it led Mengistu Haile Mariam to expel US military personnel and close US agencies. The military government surprised the US on April 23, 1977, by announcing the closure of the US Information Agency (USIA), and Kagnev Station. Furthermore, Western news correspondents from Reuter's news agency, Agence France Presse (AFP), and the Washington Post were ordered to leave the country within 48 hours (Getachew, 2009:64).

Following the arms sales ban to Ethiopia by the US administration, the military regime's aggressive retaliatory action led the country and its people to information and news scarcity. Since the major international news agencies were among the primary casualties of the

military government it was very difficult to get reliable and verifiable information during the turbulent revolutionary period.

4.6. The Military Regime and the VOA Amharic service

Following the fall of the Emperor Regime, the U.S. lost an important ally in the strategic red sea and the Horn of Africa region. The military regime, which took power in Ethiopia, disclosed that its ideological orientation is communism led by the rival super power USSR. It was a huge loss for the U.S. because this phenomenon may trigger revolutionary interest in other African countries. At the height of the infamous cold war, to contain the spread of such movement to other countries and to weaken allies of the Eastern Block the US government employed every means available; and media campaign and military intervention were the major options in the list. .

In the case of Ethiopia in the early years of the revolution, the U.S was committed to topple the military regime by supporting rebel groups in different parts of the country. To protect and restore US interest, the Reagan Administration took a bold political stand and tried to oust the USSR from Ethiopia and other Afro-Marxist states, by providing tactical support to conservative and anti-Marxist groups. In this regard, the US, played a major role in Ethiopia's politics from outside by arming, funding, and providing logistics to groups who fought to overthrow the military regime (Getachew, 2009:69).

On the other hand, the US government decided to use its cold war media arm, VOA, to promote its interest by broadcasting message to the Ethiopian population. In 1982, the Amharic Service was added to VOA's Africa Division. The first Service Chief was Brian McClure, a former US Peace Corps volunteer with a basic fluency in the language and a rudimentary knowledge of Ethiopian politics. During this initial phase of operation, the focus of the service was to counter Mengistu's information monopoly with news of international

events and targeted reports about the various 'fronts' waging war against the regime (*Annette C. Sheckler, Internet, January 20/2014*).

The Voice of America (VOA)–Amharic program was launched on 26 September 1982 to challenge the military regime and proved to be successful. The Reagan administration used the media as one of the instruments to challenge Mengistu's regime, similar to the way in which Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty were used to undermine the USSR in Eastern Europe. The media was also used to undermine other Marxist regimes in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Grenada. The VOA–Amharic program was also used to counter Radio Moscow's Amharic program, which aired for three decades, 1961 to 1991. The VOA Amharic played a momentous role in the overthrow of the Derg regime (Getachew, 2009:69).

In addition, all most all the informants agreed that the major objective of VOA Amharic broadcast was to expose the negative image of the military regime which strongly allied with the Soviet Block. As a result, the radio broadcast undermines the capability to lead the country by compromising the credibility of the regime among the population. This, in turn, opens the opportunity to audience to have another source of information about the Ethiopia and the country apart from the government controlled local media.

In this regard, two of the informants indicated that VOA Amharic service started direct broadcast years after the military regime took power in Ethiopia. This radio broadcast initially had half hour broadcast duration in the evening but within a few months the time increased to an hour because the radio broadcast got a wider acceptance from the Ethiopian audience (*personal interviewee B and C, 14th & 28th April 2014*).

Since the military regime didn't want to let different voices be heard and it controlled all the means of communication, it was very difficult to promote the start of the VOA Amharic service. Though they were not sure about whether the maiden program was listened by the

ordinary people or not but the US Embassy in Addis Ababa confirmed that the radio broadcast was able to reach Ethiopia (*Personal Interviewee C, 28th April 2014*).

The radio broadcast presented news reports, analyses, interviews, and featured guests to discuss on current affairs. The news and programs was mainly focused on issues that concern Ethiopians. Particularly, the radio broadcast gives more emphasis on news and information which the Ethiopian audience couldn't get from the government media. Like the civil war in the north, human rights violations, drought and famine, refugees, and serious abuses of power (*Personal Interviewee C, 28th April 2014*).

This broadcast gradually attracted many listeners in Ethiopia. Uncovering suppressed information and featuring opposing views encouraged listeners to tune to VOA Amharic secretly. Even members of the military regime listened to the radio to get new information about the civil war and major events in different parts of the country (*Personal Interviewee C, 28th April 2014*).

Furthermore, the radio broadcast began to include listeners' feedback and opinion on a variety of issues on a segment called 'Listeners' Forum'. And this added to the popularity of the program which generated thousands of listeners' letters from Ethiopia. According to informant C (*Personal Interviewee C, 28th April 2014*) the Amharic service had managed to receive around 85 thousand letters in the mid 1980's within two month time. This was the time the radio broadcast reached its pick and earned popularity among radio listeners. On top of this, the program received the highest ratings for several consecutive years. The military government also understood its impact and attempted to jam the radio but was unable to succeed (Getachew 2009:103).

The military regime believed the radio broadcast from VOA and other western radio services in general and the VOA Amharic service in particular were tools to promote imperialist

ideology and a weapon of propaganda to reverse the revolutionary tide in their favour. Out of fear of the growing popularity of the radio broadcast, Derg took available measures to hinder the programme from reaching its audience. In this regard jamming was the primary action taken to stop the broadcast from reaching listeners. But it was not successful and realizing the failure it resorted to forcing the public not to listen to VOA Amharic service, as is the trend in many autocratic regimes. There are unconfirmed widely circulated rumours about individuals who were caught listening to the VOA Amharic service.

To avoid the widely practiced arrest and other consequences peculiar to the era of the military administration people who listen to any foreign radio broadcast in general and VOA Amharic service in particular were advised to listen secretly in secluded way. Though this allegation was known by the larger radio audience, it was not possible to find a witness who suffered from it. All informants have confirmed that the fear and the rumour was there, but there were no regulations or don't know any case or person involved. In this entire scary situation the radio broadcast was building its popularity underground among the people who want to get alternative source of information about events in the country and across the world. Beginning from the day VOA Amharic service started broadcasting programs to Ethiopia the military government also was not happy and openly expressed its disappointment over the contents of the program. But the US government did not give attention to Derg's allegation about 'unfounded' news and information carried by the radio broadcast.

The military regime viewed the VOA Amharic service as the enemy of the revolution and the mouth piece of the opposition groups especially rebel groups who were fighting it in arms. It also claimed that since the west is against the Ethiopian revolution, VOA is challenging the regime with the message of imperialist propaganda. Because most news and programs dealt with issues like the civil war and its consequences, the famine and drought which were not covered by government controlled media but were given coverage by the VOA attracted the

attention of even government officials who used to secretly listen to it (Gesit, *Personal Interviewee*, 11th April 2014). Colonel Goshu Wolde, a senior official of the Derg also chose VOA Amharic service to announce his defection to the Ethiopian people and to his colleagues in an interview broadcasted on it (*Personal Interviewee B*, 14th April 2014 and *interviewee E*, 3rd May 2014).

The military government whose strength was affected by the prolonged civil war and the grievance of the people was unable to stay in power for more than 17 years and were removed from power by the rebel EPRDF forces in May 1991 before the VOA Amharic service celebrated its 10th year anniversary. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the Ethiopian people and the VOA radio broadcast. After the fall of the military regime VOA Amharic service has got a chance to assign stringers and correspondents in Addis Ababa and some major towns in the country to cover events first hand. And the content mainly focused on democratization and rebuilding systems badly hit by the civil war (*Personal Interviewee C*, 28th April 2014).

4.7. EPRDF and Press Freedom

After the down fall of the Military regime, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) formed a transitional government by organizing a peace conference and inviting different political groups in June 1991. The peace conference introduced a transitional period charter. The Charter recognized the right of Ethiopia's in all aspects which were denied by pervious governments who ruled the country. There were also encouraging steps that recognized the freedom of expression and press. In October 1992, the new Transitional Government of Ethiopian introduced the Press Freedom proclamation.

The proclamation recognizes press freedom through these two articles:-

1. Freedom of the press is recognized and respected in Ethiopia.

2. Censorship of the press and any restriction of a similar nature are hereby prohibited."

And Part Three further guaranteed the right of access to information:

"Any press and its agents shall, without prejudice to rights conformed by other laws, have the right to seek, obtain and report news and information from any government source of news and information" (Proclamation No. 34/92).

Furthermore, the new constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia granted basic civil freedoms to the people, including freedom of speech and of the press. And Ethiopia had also incorporated different international obligations which encourage and support the free flow of into its supreme law.

Following the formation of the transitional government and the introduction of freedom of the press the decade long fear to listen to foreign radio broadcasts and the hostility between VOA and the Ethiopian government ended. The transitional government allowed international radio services including news agencies and international newspapers to have stringers and correspondents in the country. This allowed VOA Amharic service to have correspondents and stringers to report events from Ethiopia unlike the practice during the military regime. Before the formation of the transitional government the VOA was using different news agencies like AFP, AP and Reuters and people outside of Ethiopia to collect news and information. This was the major limitation of the radio broadcast at that time (*Personal Interviewee B 14th April, C 28th April and E 3rd May 2014*).

In the first few years after the formation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), the political situation was not stable and the public was in need of objective and balanced information about events in the country. Though there were a number of private newspapers and magazines in the capital Addis Ababa, lack of experience and capital of the private

newspapers and, the low-literacy rate of citizens have hindered the private media's its contribution to the population's need for information.

After the proclamation of the Press Freedom Bill, new, independent newspapers and magazines developed, especially in Addis Ababa. These left limited number of issues of view for government-owned publications, but private media outlets suffered from inadequate fact-checking and occasional censorship, as well as the government's refusal to allow representatives from non-official papers at its press conferences (Aadland and Fackler, 1999).

With all these problems, the private press couldn't satisfy the information needs of the majority of the population. This made radio the most preferred medium. And many people listened to international radio services which broadcast in Amharic. Among such few radio broadcasts VOA Amharic service was the one people listen to.

4.8. EPRDF and VOA

When the EPRDF forces were in the northern Ethiopia jungles waging gruella warfare against the military regime, and other diaspora opposition groups were using VOA Amharic service as an important media outlet to reach the Ethiopian population. Especially EPRDF announced the outcomes of its military operation and the destruction and killings committed by the Derg via VOA alongside its field radio. They were using the station to let the public know about the civil war, the famine, civilian killed by government forces. According to a veteran journalist of the Amharic service, there were no complaints from the side of EPRDF/TPLF during the time of the civil war (*Personal Interviewee A 14th April 2014, B 14th April, C 28th April and E 3rd May 2014*).

But after the overthrow of the military government, the future of the VOA–Amharic program did not look promising. Challenges came from both the Ethiopian government and some of its U.S. supporters. The government claimed that the VOA–Amharic program was run by

Ethiopian-Americans of Amhara ethnic origin and supported the now defunct military regime or were sympathizers or previous members of EPRP, which the TPLF sees as its erstwhile enemy. Yet the VOA–Amharic program was still popular in Ethiopia (Getachew, 2009:104).

But this allegation was disputed by the VOA staffs repeatedly. According to interviewees C (28th April 2014) and E (3rd May 2014) stated there were/are producers who came from different ethnic groups other than Amhara who are known by many people and some also played an important role to start VOA's Afan Oromo and Tigrigna programs. And even though there were member of EPRP long before joining VOA Disassociated from the group and the principle and codes of VOA wouldn't allow using the radio for individual's political interest.

But the challenge from the Ethiopian government against VOA Amharic wasn't as simple as it was during the military government. After EPRDF, the rebel turned government; firmly controlled Ethiopia, the US government was highly interested in supporting the democratization process not only in Ethiopia but also in other African countries. US officials and diplomats were working hard to groom the young leaders of Ethiopia and the new country Eritrea. In this point in time, one of the bones of contention to the Ethiopian government with the US officials was the radio broadcast of VOA Amharic.

VOA was criticized by the Ethiopian government for raising human rights issues and views that are shared by different groups. Interviewees said that they know that the Ethiopian government tried hard to the termination of the program by persuading the US embassy in Ethiopia and some members of US Congress (*Personal interviewee B 14th April 2014, C 28th April 2014 and interviewee E 3rd May 2014*).

The complaint from the Ethiopian government and the support it got from the US officials put the radio broadcast existence in a critical stage. When this all was happening the radio

broadcast was still on air struggling with occasional jamming. In addition, there were no private or community radio stations other than state controlled radio broadcasts in Ethiopia.

4.9. Struggle to Save VOA Amharic

After a decade in broadcasting radio contents to Ethiopia, VOA Amharic service reached a critical stage. The new government led by EPRDF was not happy with the contents of the Amharic language broadcast. Subsequently, the government was able to convince US ambassadors and diplomats to send cables, which were critical of the Amharic service. They complained about the radio service that, the VOA Amharic service was violating the principles of journalism as it gives much emphasis to the views of groups who are working against the government. Later on, the US embassy in Addis Ababa clearly showed its support to the closing of VOA Amharic, (*Internet, Annette sheckler, 1999*).

From 1991-1996, three US ambassadors to Ethiopia - Ambassadors Mark Bass, Irvin Hicks and David Shinn - sent cables to USIA protesting the Amharic service's broadcasts alleging a strong bias in its reports. Indeed, Ambassador Hicks admitted freely that his goal was to close the Amharic service. These protests were supported by the State Department's Africa Bureau and various USIA Ethiopia desk officers. The situation became serious enough that hearings were held by VOA's Board of Governors to close down VOA's Amharic Service (*ibid*).

Even head of missions at the American embassy in Addis were supporting the closure of VOA Amharic broadcast. But informants who were working for the Amharic service at that particular time defended their works by indicating they, as much as possible, were trying to report news and produce programs on the bases of the editorial policy of the station, which demanded fairness, objectivity and balance and the grievance of the Ethiopian government. The allegations, which support the government complaints by the US diplomats were also weak and couldn't substantiate with concert evidence (*Personal Interviewee C 28th April and*

E 3rd May 2014). The new government in Ethiopia was trying to establish democracy, the embassy said, and the Ethiopian press was relatively free- - while VOA was “biased and unhelpful”. Moreover, according to the embassy, Amharic was the mother tongue of only about 30 percent of the population of Ethiopia. When VOA broadcast in that language, the mission maintained, it’s subconsciously reflected a tilt toward the Amharas when, in fact, there were other groups such as the Tigreans and the Oromos. The American ambassador, however, simply didn’t want any broadcast to Ethiopia; he contended that the Voice of America might better use its shrinking resources on other projects (Heil, 2003:266).

The pressure against the radio was very high. After the end of the Cold war, the importance of many language services was under scrutiny and was forced to stop their broadcast. And the Amharic’s existence was hanged in a balance. Then independent consultants were hired to investigate the broadcast outputs of VOA Amharic service against the allegations. But the conclusion was that the contents broadcasted by VOA Amharic service were according to the criteria and principle of the organization (*Personal Interviewee C 28th April 2014*).

But the struggle over VOA Amharic service didn’t abate. The effort to close down the Amharic service continued at senior diplomats level. To this end, George Moose, Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, wrote a memo to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, saying that VOA should not support a single ethnic group in Ethiopia. And the National Security Council (NSC) and US Information Agency (USIA) officials, lobbied by the Ethiopian government, attended a governors’ meeting of the International Broadcasting Bureau on February 2, 1996, and suggested closing the VOA–Amharic Service (Getachew 2009:105).

The Broadcasting Board of Governors called a meeting of its subcommittee on Africa for February 6, 1996, to discuss the future of the Amharic Service. To save the Amharic service VOA director Cowan devised an alternative to restructure the service; this was reducing half an hour a day from the Amharic broadcast and introducing two fifteen-minute programmes in Afan Oromo and Tigregna. Thus the Horn of Africa Service

came in existence. And this enabled VOA to remain on the air with exactly the same amount of airtime to Ethiopia, and Tigreans in neighbouring Eritrea have benefited as well (Heil, 2003:267).

The VOA's Horn of Africa Service broadcasts to Ethiopia and Eritrea were in three languages which are Amharic, Afan Oromo, and Tigrigna. Surveys conducted in Ethiopia indicate that the Service reaches 11.3 percent of the nation's mostly rural and predominantly young population. Amharic Programming is aimed at more than 90 million people living in Ethiopia and Eritrea, while Afan Oromo targets an estimated 37 percent of Ethiopians living in the Oromia region (VOAnew.com/horn). Tigrigna is heard throughout the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia and in Eritrea. The service broadcasts local, regional and international news along with programs on current affairs, health, education, development issues, and American institutions. After a few years the Amharic service reclaims its one hour broadcast and the remaining two languages increased to half an hour broadcast. And when there was election and emergencies the Amharic service produce additional half hour program in the morning alongside the evening broadcast.

4.10. Continued Mistrust

After VOA Amharic service survived the threat of closure the broadcast passed through reorganization to strengthen its activities and to get trust from the Ethiopian government. But it was not possible to create a good relationship. The government continued its complaints on the reports broadcasted by stating they were biased and promoting the agendas of the opposition. And offered a platform to organizations labelled as terrorist by the Ethiopian government.

The accusation is part of our work from every quarter from the very beginning of the Amharic service. Derg accused us of supporting and being a mouth piece to the enemy of the revolution and anti-Ethiopia forces, but couldn't deter our work. And after the fall of the military regime the accusations and complaints got stronger which challenged the very

existence of the Amharic service. But we know that since we are working on the bases of principle we couldn't satisfy all sides. As far as my understanding is concerned, when opposing sides are complaining it means what is being done is being done impartially (*Personal Interviewee C, 28th April 2014*). In this regard, though most of the discontents and accusations came from the government side sometimes the opposition and individual diaspora also accuses the Amharic broadcast of not reporting every event and compromising to the interest of the Ethiopian government. In such polarized political atmosphere it is difficult to satisfy the interests of the rival groups. The pressure from the Ethiopian government side was very strong and continuous. But the journalists always claim that they are performing their duties in accordance with the journalistic principles and the station's policy. And as Heil (2003:266) puts it VOA Amharic, like other African Division services of the 1990s, was simply reporting the truth. But sometimes the truth was not what the government of Ethiopia wanted to be heard.

The charges are always there against VOA Amharic simmering at low level during the political situation remain stable. When the political atmosphere turned tense the dormant grievance of the government blown out and took a serious twists and turns. Especially, during the election period the complaints reached a highest level.

4.11. Worsening Relation

On the bases of reports covered by VOA Amharic the Ethiopian government was not happy and this tainted the relationship at the very beginning of the broadcast. The military government totally closed its door against the radio service. And the new government which replaced Derg opened its door to it in terms of allowing VOA Amharic service to have correspondents and stringers in the country. But this improved relationship was not long lasting. In a short period of time the new government began voicing its complaints on reports aired as biased for the opposition. This complaints and accusations continued an abated.

Sometimes the radio broadcast and its correspondents faced a hostile situation which hindered the work they do.

During political unrest and at the period of election the already spoiled relation got to the breaking point with strong complaints on the radio reports. Almost all accusations against VOA Amharic centred on biasedness of reports and discussions and reports were intended to promote the political interest of the opposition. When situations got tense the complaints also went worse. Especially the unrest following the 2005 election, the relationship between the Ethiopian government and VOA Amharic fall from the fay to the fire.

During such unstable situation VOA Amharic in different times, faced repeated jamming to prevent it from being listened to clearly in Ethiopia. Audience of the radio reported difficulties in getting a clear signal of the radio service. Radio monitoring reports also confirmed the radio broadcast encountered jamming. But no one claimed responsibility for it.

International shortwave radio monitors confirmed that VOA broadcasts in the Amharic language are being jammed . . . VOA representatives in Ethiopia were receiving complaints from listeners about noise drowning out its Amharic Service broadcasts. People trying to tune in can hear occasional snippets of the VOA broadcast covered by a loud crackle. Monitors say VOA transmissions in two other Ethiopian languages, Afan Oromo and Tigrinya, are being heard normally even if they were broadcasted on the same frequencies, before and after the hour-long Amharic program (www.voanews.com).

The report also indicated that the broadcast was jammed around the time of the 2005 parliamentary election, and again before the 2008 nationwide local elections. The authoritative BBC monitoring service reported it was able to determine that the jamming signals originated from within Ethiopia. But Ethiopian Office of Government

Communications Affairs spokesman Shimelis Kemal denied government involvement in the jamming.

A leaked diplomatic cable (Wikileaks.org) stated about the ruined relationship with the radio. And it said that Ethiopia was the only African country to persistently jam the Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts (and has done so off and on since the mid-nineties) . . . and in 2005 following the election violence alongside the opposition CUD leaders five American citizen VOA staff members were charged with capital offenses for allegedly supporting opposition groups. But the charges were dropped unlike the others.

The reports during the bloody electoral disputes strengthened the government's discontent on VOA Amharic service and it believed that journalists played a destructive role in fanning the dispute and promoting riot in their broadcast. Ethiopian officials have often described VOA's Amharic Service as the 'voice of the opposition', saying its broadcasts reveal an anti-government bias.

And after a repeated denial by different Ethiopian government officials the late Prime Minister admitted that his administration was jamming the Voice of America's (VOA) broadcasts in Amharic, accusing the radio station of engaging in "destabilising propaganda". And Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said Ethiopia had been testing jamming equipment, but there had been no formal decision to block the US station. The Prime Minister compared the radio transmissions to the broadcasts in Rwanda in the mid-1990s that incited genocide. But VOA officials rejected the accusation as incorrect and unfortunate. And the station added that the Amharic Service was required by law to provide accurate and objective information (<http://news.bbc.co.uk>). To find another way to reach its audience VOA began broadcasting to Ethiopia via satellite after it jammed and sparked a diplomatic row.

In addition, VOA Amharic radio broadcast remained the topic of disagreement and complaints from the side of Ethiopian government. As recently revealed classified US diplomatic cables by Wikileaks indicated the radio's activity was among the agendas discussed by US officials and diplomats with Ethiopian government officials. This indicates that the Ethiopian administration is not happy about the Amharic service.

4.12. Role played by VOA

VOA was set up during World War II to communicate America's messages to the rest of the world in more than 40 languages. According to the Charter and Principles of VOA the radio broadcast revolve around serving the interests of the United States by broadcasting objective and fair news and information to the targeted audience. To this end it is working to win the respect of listeners. In particular the VOA broadcast to Ethiopia role is a point of contention to different stake holders in US and Ethiopia. At its early stages its role was to counter military government's control of the media and Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa. In an article written by once head of the Horn of Africa service puts;

The role of VOA's Amharic Service, later the Horn of Africa Service, played and continues to play an important role in the politics of that region. Whether or not this role is positive or negative depends on where you are sitting. I will argue he that, for the United States government, the role played by VOA broadcasting to that region, has been detrimental not only to US foreign policy interests, but to the credibility of the VOA, and the long-term peace, stability, and democratisation of a highly volatile and strategic region of Africa (Annett Scheckler).

When the role of VOA Amharic service raised as a point of discussed different points can be stated from various quarters that have an interest. We can identify four different stakeholders in regard to the radio broadcast. Here the owner of the station comes first because who have all the capacity to dictate the role, and the remaining three are from the receiving end, these are the Ethiopian government, the opposition parties and the public are who are always speaks about the role of the VOA Amharic service.

While Ethiopia was under the military rule, the Cold War ideological rivalry between the West and the East the role of the radio broadcast was clear. It was to counter anti-US propaganda and to win acceptance among the population. As Heil (2003: 204) puts US officials had a higher interest to use VOA as weapon against the rival super power USSR and they insist it in every opportunity they got. Philip Nicolaides, a policy advisor on VOA, wrote a memo 'the only raison d'etere for the VOA is to counter USSR propaganda by portraying it as the last great predatory empire on earth. . . . we must strive to destabilize the Soviet Union and its allies. . . we should seek to drive wedges resentment and suspicious between the leadership of the various communist bloc nations. . . . news should be factually accurate. Credibility is all important. But we need not expatiate endlessly on stories which tend to put us or our allies in a bad light while glossing over stories which discredit the leadership of the communist nations.'

But after the end of Cold War the role of the radio broadcast was in question. And the United States and most other countries stopped or reduced their involvement in international broadcasting because they started it solely to fight the cold war. It is remembered that the reason to the recommendation to closed VOA–Amharic was that it had outlived its usefulness. According to the US embassy, VOA–Amharic was a relic of the Cold War era (Getachew, 2009:104).

After a ferrous struggle to close or keep VOA Amharic broadcast the new Horn Service brought additional new language services to Ethiopia (Afan Oromo and Tigregna). More than three decade old Amharic services staffs who speak the two languages also played an important role to begin the new programs. Tizita Belachew spoke Afan Oromo, and Adanech Fissehaye spoke Tigregna were the organizers (Heil, 2003:265). This can be considered as a contribution of the Amharic service.

On the other hand, until recently, the electronic media especially the far reaching radio broadcasts were controlled by the government broadcasters. This also couldn't give the public a chance to get all the necessary information about political and social events in the country in an objective way. After the start of VOA Amharic service many people listen to find new information and to verify any event they know from the other side. Almost all informants listen to VOA Amharic service to find out news, which are not covered in the local media. And the radio tried to feature all parties involved in the news and programmes it produces.

The government controlled media mostly covered one sided reports about burning political and social issues. The audience still didn't have the chance to listen to the other side of any given news event. But as far as the parties involved in the issue are willing to express their sides, listeners have a greater chance to get more balanced information from VOA Amharic service. This made the radio broadcast an alternative source of news and information for the Amharic listening Ethiopian audience locally and abroad (*All personal interviewees*).

In more than three decades of its existence, listeners relied on it as a source of news and information about Ethiopia. But this doesn't mean that it was the sole player in this regard. Though many people listen to local radio broadcast they also listened to international radios like VOA Amharic to find additional information. Particularly political groups who couldn't find a chance to air their view in the government control media used VOA to reach the public. This helped the radio broadcast to be listened more in the time of political and social tensions like elections, political instability and disasters.

Since a large number of Ethiopians are living in the United States and other countries living and working in various capacities it also served as a forum to share their Knowledge, experience and stand on different social and political issues that touches the life of Ethiopians

back home and in the diaspora. This gave the diaspora a chance to connect and involve in the activities Ethiopians are concerned. In this regard VOA Amharic was serving the diaspora as forum to promote and contribute to Ethiopians (*Personal interviewee A, 14th April 2014*).

After the Ethiopian government recognized freedom of the press, a number of newspapers and magazines were in circulation. And many of them used news and information about Ethiopia monitored from the VOA Amharic.

Since we were new to the press activity with less or no experience to journalism the major source of information and a model to emulate was VOA Amharic service. The work of private press were not known before EPRDF came to power most newspaper and magazines were trying to learn the work by doing and coping other foreign media outlets. With a very few staff and a meagre resource to collect news and information to meet the deadline was very difficult therefore listening and compiling news and other information from VOA Amharic one means to ease the burden. Furthermore, quoting VOA was the safest and reliable source to avoid charges and complaints from different quarters (*ibid*).

Still the private press used information from VOA Amharic in one way or another that they couldn't find by themselves. In addition, programs which feature the US democratic system, an extensive coverage about election and human rights had a role in developing democratic attitude in the listeners of the radio broadcast (*Personal interviewee A 14th April 2014 and B 14th April 2014*). Different perspectives on various political and social topics also instigated an open discussion on among antagonistic groups in the country and diaspora.

Though this radio broadcast reaches to the population that couldn't be overlooked, the government perspective on the role of VOA Amharic service is far more different from the other stakeholders on the broadcast. In different times senior Ethiopian government officials accused the radio broadcast as a mouth piece of the opposition, biased and unhelpful,

engaged in destabilizing and hate propaganda, and the late Prime Minister compared the VOA to a Rwandan radio station accused of stoking the 1994 genocide that killed about 800,000 people (<http://edition.cnn.com>). On the bases of its complaints the Ethiopian government more most of the time not willing to take part in most discussions and news pieces that needs its participation on VOA Amharic. But some officials were available in English and Tigregna language services of VOA to discuss on issues of the country. Though they have repeatedly tried to contact Ethiopian officials, the Amharic service staffs use other alternative to make their stories balanced. They translate their responses from the other languages the officials were willing to respond.

The program schedule and reviewed sample programs of VOA Amharic service clearly indicate that the major focus of the broadcast lays on the news and news analysis programs. In the week days this segment of the broadcast covers at least half of the broadcast time. The news and analysis part mainly deals with issues about the relation between Ethiopian and US. But there are programs and discussions that deal with other political, economic and social topics of Ethiopia and the US.

In the news, news analysis and programs broadcasted it is difficult to find the stand and interest of the United States government. Though it is not presented often in the Amharic broadcast, an editorial piece is presented to publicize the stand of the US government on different current issues. These editorials are usually presented at the end of the broadcast with a separated music jingle expressing that the editorial is the reflection of the US government stand. This distinctly separates it from the other contents. The VOA editorial is produced by US government agency to promote the interest and position of the government on the bases of the current situation in the US and other parts of the world.

On the bases of the values and principles, all language services work to fulfil under the controlling body. Similarly, in line with the professional obligation VOA–Amharic is believed working in furthering US public diplomacy efforts. Currently the program offers news and information to millions of VOA–Amharic listeners throughout Ethiopia. It also reaches Ethiopians in the diaspora through the Internet. The program covers US and world news, cultural highlights, and an in-depth coverage of social, political, and economic issues. It was reported that listenership in Ethiopia’s rural areas has increased. More than 11 percent of Ethiopians tune to VOA–Amharic every week (*Getachew, 2009:106*).

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CHAPTER FIVE

5. Conclusions and Implication for Future Research

Voice of America (VOA) Amharic service radio broadcast is still one of the radio broadcasts from abroad to reach the Ethiopian audience. The radio broadcast was established by the US government to broadcast news and programs in Amharic from Washington DC in 1982. Beginning from 1996, the radio included Afan Orom and Tigregna languages of Ethiopia in its broadcast language lists (Heil, L. Alan, Jr. 2003:266).

In exploring the history and role of VOA Amharic broadcasting in the two regimes of its existence, the filters Herman and Chomsky coined can be used. According to the filters the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms and Anticommunism as a national religion and control mechanism employed.

In this regard, the relationship between the military regime and the current government of Ethiopia were separately examined. The VOA Amharic service broadcast its contents. During the military regime the major objective of the radio broadcast was to weaken the communist military government through its anti-communist contents on the bases of the interest of the owner (US government) to contain the spread of communism to other counties of Africa. Though its news and programs were based factual events happened it was under ideological influence of the sponsoring country. It also served as an alternative source of news and information for the Amharic listeners during the dictatorial regime. Therefore, with all the Cold War, political rivalry and influence the finding indicted that it served its audience as a source of information that one couldn't find from the government controlled local media.

After the fall of the military regime, VOA Amharic broadcast continued its service to the Ethiopian audience. At that time, the ideological rivalry between the East and the West ended following the disintegration of USSR. This heralded the end of ideological competition to

influence countries. And under a single super power, the new world order and the globalization rhetoric controls the air wave from the western media.

As the military government did, the new EPRDF led government started complaining about the operation of VOA Amharic service after it took power in Addis Ababa. As some informants and literature indicated that even the US diplomats also tried hard to close down the radio broadcast by saying after the fall of the military regime the need to keep the Amharic service is not necessary. This argument indicates that the radio broadcast was mainly established to undermine the communist military regime rather than serving the public as an alternative source of information. But on the other hand, people who fought hard to keep the Amharic service focused on the other dimension of the station: to continue serving as an alternative source of information about Ethiopia and the world. And many believed that VOA Amharic service is still serving as a source of news and information in a country where the government is the major media operator though there are private media outlets.

This study tried to examine the history, role as well as the challenges in broadcasting VOA Amharic service in a changing political context of Ethiopian's two governments. The radio is playing its role as an alternative media outlet on the bases of its mission given by the charter and other journalism codes and principles. The charter allows VOA to serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news, represent America's significant thought and institutions and it present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively, and will also present responsible discussions and opinion on current affairs by giving more emphasis to the interest of the US in any situation. So alongside serving as alternative source of information to the targeted audience, it also has the mission to promote the policies and interest of the US government. The major problem of the mistrust of the Ethiopian government towards the Amharic service remains the same. As a result, mostly, the Ethiopian government officials are not willing to respond to the questions from the Amharic service.

This creates a gap in the news and information from the broadcast that needs the participation of the Ethiopian government.

The increasing number of listeners to the VOA Amharic service among Ethiopians, both at home and abroad is a clear indicator to the popularity of the radio broadcast and the need for more information about the country from the audience. So the solution to fix the broken relationship is for the Ethiopian government to use the charter and the journalistic codes and principles of the broadcast to substantiate its complaints. And to reverse the alleged biased reporting, the government should always take part to explain its side rather than refuse to appear on the Amharic service. Jamming the broadcast shouldn't be taken as an option as doing so may increase the demand for alternative information from the side of the listeners, and this act violates the constitutionally guaranteed citizens' right to get information.

Rather the remedy should be making diverse and balanced information available to the public through the government controlled and other media outlets and allowing more private radio stations which cover pertinent and opposing views fairly in every aspect. This gives the audience a chance to select their information source and encourage trusting local media in their news and information regarding events in the country. These all contribute to the development of a democratic system. But until then, VOA Amharic service will remain as an alternative source of information to its listeners established in the past three decades.

Further studies on different aspects of VOA Amharic service activities can help understand the broadcasting service more and this particular study will initiate others to find out about the contents broadcasted on different services of VOA radio to Ethiopia. Though VOA Amharic service has been on air for more than three decades researches made on it are very limited and it's important to study it further since it has far reaching influence among its

audience. To this end this study can serve as a spring board to future studies on VOA Amharic service.

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2. Dr. Hailu Araaya, a Veteran politician and member of an opposition party, 04th April 2014, at his office, Addis Ababa
3. Daniel Dirsha, Editor in Chief and Editor for different Newspapers and magazines, 11th April 2014, at his office, Addis Ababa
4. Gesit Techane, Member of Derg's propaganda committee and Author, 11th April 2014, Addis Ababa
5. Interviewee A, a Veteran private press journalist, 14th April 2014, at a café, Addis Ababa
6. Interviewee B, a Veteran radio journalist, 14th April 2014, at his office, Addis Ababa
7. Interviewee C, a veteran VOA Amharic journalist, 28th April 2014, via telephone, (location withheld)
8. Interviewee C, a VOA Amharic journalist, 5th 2014, (location withheld)
9. Interviewee D, a retired VOA Amharic journalist, 3rd May 2014, via email, USA

ANNEX A

VOA's broadcasting Standards and Principles

As an international broadcaster VOA put in place a detailed broadcasting standards and principles that originate from the charter which governs the activities of VOA. Broadcasting Board of Governance (BBG) is a body which monitors these standards and principles practiced properly in the day to day activities of different language broadcasters under VOA. To have the overview of this standards and principles let's have a look on the major points

Broadcasting Standards

- Be consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States
- Be consistent with the international telecommunications policies and treaty obligations of the United States
- Not duplicate the activities of private United States broadcasters
- Not duplicate the activities of government supported broadcasting entities of other democratic nations
- Be conducted in accordance with the highest professional standards of broadcast journalism
- Be based on reliable information about its potential audience²
- Be designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience
- Promote respect for human rights, including freedom of religion

Broadcasting Principles

- News which is consistently reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive
- A balanced and comprehensive projection of United States thought and institutions, reflecting the diversity of United States culture and society
- Clear and effective presentation of the policies, including editorials, broadcast by the Voice of America, which present the views of the United States Government³ and responsible discussion and opinion on those policies
- The capability to provide a surge capacity to support United States foreign policy objectives during crises abroad⁴
- Programming to meet needs which remain unserved by the totality of media voices available to the people of certain nations
- Information about developments in each significant region of the world
- A variety of opinions and voices from within particular nations and regions prevented by censorship or repression from speaking to their fellow countrymen
- Reliable research capacity to meet the criteria under this section

These are the standards and principles any language service broadcast in VOA should strictly follow in performing their day today activities. (<http://www.bbg.gov>)

Journalistic Code

Since its establishment, the Voice of America work hard to build a global reputation as a consistently reliable source of news and information. Accuracy, balance, comprehensiveness, and objectivity are attributes audiences around the world have come to expect of VOA broadcasters and their product.

Adhering to the principles outlined in the Charter, VOA reporters and broadcasters must strive for accuracy and objectivity in all their work. They do not speak for the U.S. government. They accept no treatment or assistance from U.S. government officials or agencies that is more favorable or less favorable than that granted to staff of private-sector news agencies. Furthermore, VOA professionals, careful to preserve the integrity of their organization, strive for excellence and avoid imbalance or bias in their broadcasts.

Broadcasting accurate, balanced and complete information to the people of the world, and particularly to those who are denied access to accurate news, serves the national interest and is a powerful source of inspiration and hope for all those who believe in freedom and democracy.

The Code

Sourcing: VOA news and programming must be rigorously sourced and verified. VOA normally requires a minimum of two independent (non-VOA) sources before any news writer, background writer, political affairs writer, correspondent, or stringer may broadcast information as fact in any language.

The only exceptions to the double-source requirement are facts directly confirmed by a VOA journalist, or significant news drawn from an official announcement of a nation or an organization. In those rare instances when a secondary source offers exclusive significant

news (e.g., a verified news agency exclusive interview with a chief of state or prominent newsmaker), this story is attributed to the originating agency by name.

Accuracy and Balance: Accuracy and balance are paramount, and together, they are VOA's highest priority. Accuracy always comes before speed in VOA central service and language programming. VOA has a legal obligation to present a comprehensive description of events, reporting an issue in a reliable and unbiased way. Though funded by the U.S. government, VOA airs all relevant facts and opinions on important news events and issues. VOA corrects errors or omissions in its own broadcasts at the earliest opportunity.

Fairness: VOA has, in the words of the Founding Fathers, "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." VOA is required to present a full and fair account of events. VOA broadcasters evaluate information solely on its merits, rejecting incitements to violence, sensationalism, personal value judgments, or misleading emphases. Attributions are specific and complete.

Context and Comprehensiveness

VOA presents a comprehensive account of America and the world, and puts events in context. That means constant vigilance to reflect America's, and the world's, political, geographical, cultural, ethnic, religious, and social diversity. VOA programming represents the broadcast team's best effort to seek out and present a comprehensive account of the event or trend being reported.

Procedures

When performing official duties, VOA broadcasters leave their personal political views behind. The accuracy, quality, and credibility of the Voice of America are its most important assets, and they rest on listeners' perception of VOA as an objective source of world, regional, and U.S. news and information (<http://www.insidevoa.com>).

ANNEX B

Amharic program schedule

Every evening from 9PM to 10PM the Amharic service broadcasts its news and information contents throughout the week and adds a 30 minutes morning broadcast when there is an emergency (elections, like conflicts and natural disasters). The program schedule has a wide variety of contents alongside news and news analysis in the weekdays. The following list will give a glimpse on a daily bases about VOA Amharic service content and focus.

- Monday:

*News a bulletin of news events local and international events

*News Analysis, detail report and interview on major topic or topics of the day local or international

*listeners' comment present listeners' reaction on topics covered and opinion on different issues (via phone and email)

*Sports, a roundup of sports activities

*African Topics, deals with the major event or topic that took place in Africa

*Health, presents a piece on a wide range of health issues

Tuesday:

*News, a bulletin of news events local and international events

*News Analysis, detail report and interview on major topic or topics of the day local or international

*listeners' comment present listeners' reaction on topics covered and opinion on different issues (via phone and email)

*Business & economics, mainly focus on local issues of business and economics

*Ask the Doctor, features doctors to answer questions of listeners' on their health concerns

*Agriculture, presents a wide range of farming issues

ANNEX C

VOA Amharic Frequencies

The Amharic service airs daily for an hour in the evening from 9PM to 10PM on the frequencies below:

9700 on the 31-meter band

11520, 11905, 11925 & 12140 on the 25-meter band

13870 on the 22-meter band

Following the repeated jamming and after the Ethiopian government openly confirmed its desire and effort to jam VOA Amharic broadcast, the radio station has come up with another way to reach its listeners by devising another way of broadcasting. Via a satellite to those who have the receiver. To access the new audio channel on the Arabsat satellite:

Satellite: Arabsat 26° East

Downlink Frequency: 11.938 GHz

FEC: 3/4

Symbol Rate: 27.5 MSym/s

Downlink Polarization: Vertical

VC: 544/1L and IR