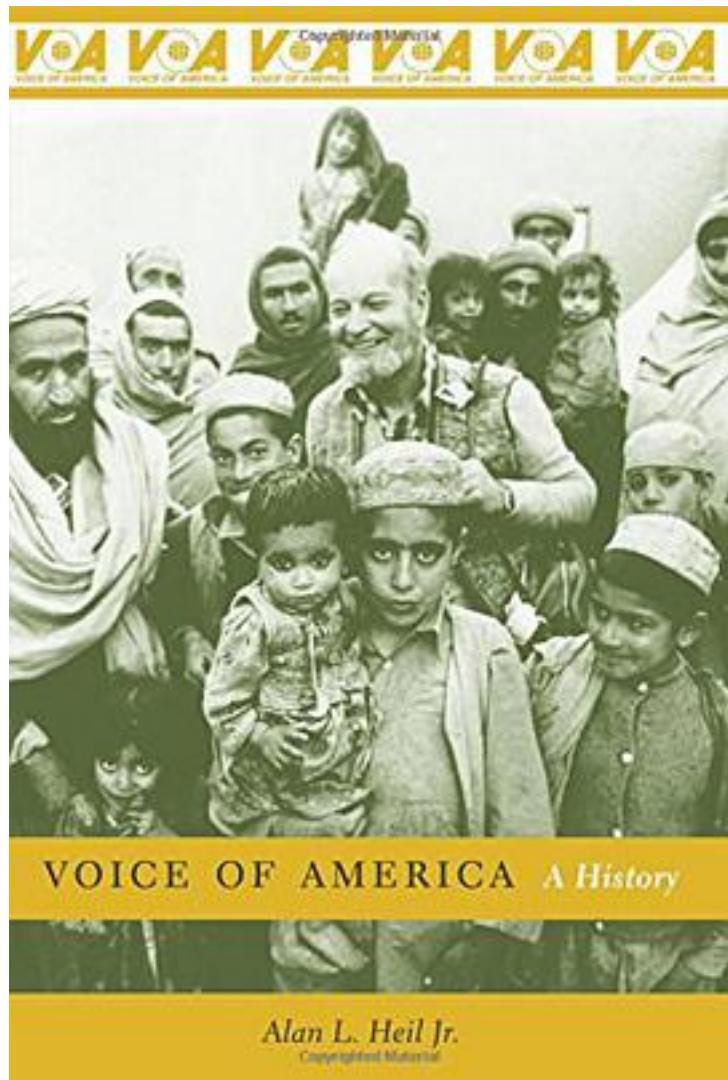


# Voice of America



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The Voice of America is the nation's largest publicly funded broadcasting network, reaching more than 90 million people worldwide in over forty languages. Since it first went on the air as a regional wartime enterprise in February 1942, VOA has undergone a spectacular transformation, and it now employs scores of reporters worldwide and broadcasts around the clock every day of every year, reaching listeners in the four-fifths of the world still denied a completely free press. Alan L. Heil, Jr., former deputy director of VOA, chronicles this remarkable transformation from a fledgling short wave propaganda organ during World War II to a global multimedia giant encompassing radio, the Internet, and 1,500 affiliated radio and television stations across the globe. Using transcripts of radio broadcasts and numerous personal anecdotes, Heil gives the reader a front-row seat to the greatest events of the past sixty years, from the Cold War and the Vietnam conflict to the Watergate and Lewinsky scandals, from Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon in 1969 to ethnic strife in the Balkans and Rwanda in the mid-1990s, and from the outbreak of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Yet Heil also relates the story of a perennially underfunded organization struggling against the political pressures, congressional investigations, massive reorganizations, and leadership purges that have attempted to shape-and, in some instances, control-VOA programming. Reporting first hand, high-quality news is a monumental task for any network, but the Voice faces obstacles unique to an organization that stands, as former director John Chancellor once observed, at "the crossroads of journalism and diplomacy." It is for this reason that many people still perceive VOA as an instrument of American propaganda. However, as a thirty-six-year veteran of VOA and its numerous policy wars, Heil believes that the Voice has always sought to deliver accurate, objective, and comprehensive news of the highest journalistic standard, news that reflects America's diversity and dynamism, and that presents not only U.S. policies but also critical debate about those policies. This in-depth history of VOA from its founding until its sixtieth anniversary is a vivid portrait of the people who made it great, depicting a news network that has overcome enormous challenges to steadfastly and faithfully report the most important news stories of our time.

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