

Is Free Peace Research Possible?

Impossibility of funding peace research that refuses to be intellectually "embedded"

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Theme: [History](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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Reflections on the increasing impossibility of funding peace research that refuses to be intellectual 'embedding' in power.

SUMMARY

This analysis has come about for four reasons:

1. Over the last couple of decades, it has become virtually impossible to do research that is truly free. This applies particularly to smaller organizations which, if they do obtain money, seldom have the capacity to both conduct the product meaningfully and satisfy grant-makers' bureaucratic rules and regulations which increasingly borders on the bizarre and sabotage.

2. We want to offer insights to anyone who is not part of the research community - insights seldom revealed to the lay persons outside the research community. The article gives concrete evidence and examples.

3. We fear that open societal debate, dialogue, a vibrant democratic exchange is being sacrificed day by day due to the insatiable urges of bureaucrats and increasingly we-know-best authoritarian politicians who only benefits from critical, independent research being suffocated. The corporative research model militates against fundamental research principles and potentially paralyzes democratic debate.

4. The trends we have seen over the 24 years TFF has existed are deeply discouraging. There is no reason anymore to not go public with them. We want to tell you how difficult it therefore is to survive for an organisation like TFF.

People-financing is the only method to maintain focus on the public interest and further research that is truly independent from the war-mongering state. If that also drops or comes to halt, the 'masters of war' will win and peace will lose the final battle.

And battle it is - of quite some relevance for humanity's existence in the future!

The article gives examples of why free peace research - if not social research in general - is becoming increasingly impossible. It starts out with an exposé of the funds being available worldwide for peace and for the military - about 200 times more for the latter. The ratio of

peace researchers to military researchers is probably 1:100+. It may both be true that (government-financed) peace research is booming and that scores of institutes have been closed down.

Today's funding situation in Denmark and Sweden for peace-oriented research is then described and comparative flashbacks made to the situation in the 1980s and 1990s. If you think of Scandinavia in general as liberal and generous in this field, it's time for a reality check.

Then, how must you act to obtain funds? You must be politically correct and adapt to the corporate model, even to the extent of knowing your words are not commensurable with what you actually wanted to do. The funding agency calls the shots.

But what if you do manage to obtain funds? Then new problems begin and less and less of the energy devoted will benefit peace; it will, rather, benefit bureaucracies. Small organisations simply do not have the funds nor the staff to meet the requirements of larger funding-agencies - apart from not liking being treated as a potential criminal most of the time.

Here we offer an example from a recent project managed by TFF. Christina Spännar, TFF co-founder and project responsible, writes her story as to how it was to be funded by the European Refugee Fund and the Swedish Immigration Authority and stand in the middle between them and two municipalities in which project was partly located. She spent 75% of the project time satisfying the grant-makers requirements and only 25% on helping improve the lot for foreigners who have come to Sweden as refugees. Her conclusion is - "never again."

We offer some conclusions and draw up the consequences for TFF's future - if it shall have one.

Hypothesis and point of departure

It's a credo of Western culture, political and otherwise, that democracy, freedom of opinion and dynamic social development requires freedom to challenge old knowledge and develop new - i.e. to search and re-search. Research is impossible without funds - project funds, grants, scholarships - provided by private and public institutions or individual donors. It is part of the credo that that funds are made available without strings attached, i.e. embody the essential right and duty to freely seek knowledge and truth without considering what interests there may be, including those of financiers and power-holders, in particular outcomes of the research.

Over the 30+ years I have been engaged in research, first at Lund University and, since 1985, at the Transnational Foundation I've seen these features of our society slowly but surely being undermined by a variety of factors. Whatever has been liberal in a philosophical sense - defending the right to have many, diverging and competing opinions - is rapidly fading throughout the presumed liberal Western culture; this has become rather conspicuous in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War.

We tell each other that we live in an information and knowledge society; however, it seems to me that genuinely free knowledge is increasingly marginalised by the marketing of

constructed thought patterns and pseudo truths at one end of the spectrum and a convenient, self-censoring or self-complacent lack of the fundamentally important challenging of old knowledge, at the other. In other words, intellectualism is squeezed out of virtually every mainstream discourse, in the parliaments, media and elsewhere, in the age of purposefully manufactured knowledge production.

Another feature is the remarkable “commodification” of knowledge; what is promoted by states and corporate interests is research that can be sold, meet a market “demand” rather than what, according to some higher-level judgement, humanity may need in a longer time perspective.

Researchers must become entrepreneurs rather than seekers and market themselves in supposedly intellectual enterprises. Social science in general and the humanities in particular – which are not based on or aiming at any market – have already suffered for decades from this development.

This said, it deserves mention perhaps that in some senses free research was always an illusion. For instance, a researcher who has attended a state school, then a state university, then becomes a professor at a state university and obtains research funds over several decades from the National Research Council and ends his academic career with a state pension is unlikely to have been a highly independent thinker and a creative mind driven by thinking ‘out of the box’; but of course there may be exceptional cases here and there.

We find little discussion of issues such as these and of their likely consequences in each society and for humankind’s future. ‘Money makes the world go ‘round’ and state and corporate funders are loath to discuss the ways they call the shots over intellectual production. Politicians traditionally do not mind value-based research as long as it supports their own thinking and ideology and can be presented as ‘objective science’. And most researchers will tell you that they don’t really feel that there are any restrictions, they feel free and – if not quite – where else would they find the funds to pursue their interests?

Before I elaborate on these – perhaps provocative – perspectives, I admit that the arguments and analysis in this article are limited to the field(s) I can talk about, namely conflict-resolution, peace, security, development, world order, global governance and democracy. And my examples are picked in the Nordic/Scandinavian setting that I know best.

The global resources – gross imbalance

Let’s begin with what is in fact not particularly new but still a fact hidden to most citizens: the tremendous imbalance between funds available for peace research and violence research.

In a recent study, TFF Associate Scilla Elworthy offers these 2005 figures for the global society based on OECD statistics:

Global military expenditures

US 1200 billion

OECD development aid

US 106 billion

Peace work

US 6 billion

Conflict prevention

US 0,6 billion

The definition of 'peace' may vary so a connoisseur may doubt the figure US\$ 6 bn for peace work, but let us stay with this generous estimate here. It means that the world community invests roughly 200 times more in the sector of violence than in peace. (The 2008 military expenditures figure is 1464 billion).

One may add that the UN's Millennium Project has estimated that the annual costs of meeting the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015 is around US\$ 135 billion per year, little more than 10% of the money currently allocated to the military sector. In the larger perspective, the United Nations' annual budget for all its agencies and funds amounts to US \$ 27 or 1,8 % of the members states' military investments.

In terms of knowledge production, even a broad definition of 'peace research' would result in a ratio of 1 peace researcher to 100-200 researchers and engineers being paid by military institutions and industries for developing new weapons and doctrines on a daily basis.

Years ago, there was an estimate of 400,000 military researchers and engineers worldwide, at a time when the two leading peace research associations would number 4,000-5,000 worldwide (there may be quite a few researchers whose work is relevant to an understanding of peace but who are not members of those associations). If we estimate the number of peace researchers today to be around 15.000 (see the New York Times article mentioned below), the proportions are, in all probability, about the same, i.e. 1:100+.

Most countries around the world train their young men in various aspects of killing on the basis of either conscription or contract. Likewise, virtually all have military academies, colleges and university departments while extremely few have established peace academies or provisions for the teaching of peace and non-violence at primary or secondary school levels.

There are indicators to the effect that peace and conflict research is booming. The New York Times of October 14, 2008 mentioned that there are now 800+ peace research institutes, 15.000 researchers and 450 academic peace studies programs worldwide

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/14/world/americas/14iht-redpeace.1.16931708.html>.

Some of us, however, have also had experiences over the years of -

1. The closing down of respected peace research and educational institutes or
2. Their transformation into mainstream 'international relations', 'security' or 'political science' institutes.

The author has witnessed the closing down of three peace and conflict institutes (research and/or educational efforts) in Denmark, the latest being the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, COPRI, under director Håkan Wiberg's very able leadership.

In 1989 the Lund University Peace Research Institute (LUPRI) was closed down by its social science faculty without consulting this author who happened to be its director since 1983.

The attempts at Umeå University (Sweden) and Tromsø University (Norway), IUPIP in Rovereto, Italy, and EPU in Schläining, Austria - are further examples that I have been related to one way or the other.

Added to that could be, depending on criteria and personal values, the transformation of a number of state and university peace research institutes in the direction mentioned under b) above. There seems to be a rather significant correlation between becoming highly institutionalized and well-funded on the one hand and loss of radical, or alternative, non-mainstream thinking on the other. Those invited to be advisers or do projects with and for, say, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, tend to decrease in will to criticize that government.

Theoretically one could argue that liberal society should invest equally in understanding violent and peaceful behaviour, or even that the latter should in fact be given priority. It is true that the research carried out inside what could be called the global MIMAC - the Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex - has, almost by definition, to be more capital-intensive and thus expensive. But even so, the global imbalance is mind-boggling and, if anything, getting worse.

Consequently, young student's decision to devote him- or herself to a life-long engagement in peace rather than violence research today requires an extremely high level of idealism and moral conviction as well as a deliberate renunciation of several job opportunities and job security, not to speak of a high income.

Diminished funding for peace and non-violence research - examples from Sweden and Denmark

First of all, there is less funding available for peace, conflict and non-violence research than, say, 20 years ago.

As the director of LUPRI, I remember how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm commissioned - that is, paid - our scholars to write background analyses of a more theoretical, conceptual nature; this not only helped finance the institute's activities; it also established a kind of dialogue between theory and practise, between power and research that I continue to consider fundamentally important for democracy.

Those were the days when there existed, among decision-makers, an intellectual curiosity and a will to know the basics about concepts and theories of peace, security, deterrence, East-West relations and conflict-resolution.

Those were also the years when Sweden was neutral and not a member of EU or a stealth member of NATO as today's Sweden is; it needed to develop its own views and interpretations of world events to shape its often independent-minded policies. Sweden took international initiatives with smaller, like-minded countries and had a high profile concerning international law and commitment to the UN, and it had a disarmament minister. It was

within that tradition, too, one must see the publishing of the Palme Commission's common security report, in hindsight one of the most innovative and clearheaded documents that presumably contributed substantially to ending the Cold War structure.

No more so today. While the same ministry gave TFF a small grant for our first war-time missions to former Yugoslavia in 1991, it never once showed any interest in what TFF's team knew about all the parts of that country and about places there that no Swedish diplomat could set foot on. While our first report "After Yugoslavia - What?" was distributed and sold in 3,000 copies and UN envoy Cyrus Vance spent hours reading and discussing it, the then Swedish ambassador to Belgrade had little else to say that the report had a very nice layout.

With Sweden's unreserved support for the US/NATO bombing of ex-Yugoslavia in spring 1999, the last remnants of Sweden's special foreign and peace policy profile was gone. And not only that; so was TFF's annual support by the Ministry - undoubtedly for getting too far around the world with solid arguments against the bombing before it actually took place.

During the 1970s and 1980s there were other smaller funding possibilities, private foundations as well as the Nordic Co-operation Committee to mention two. In Denmark there was the Danish Government Commission for Security and Disarmament (Danish abbreviation, SNU) where an ongoing exchange took place among politicians, experts, bureaucrats and media people and decent studies - albeit never radical in any sense - were published and caused public debate. (The author was a member for about a decade.)

Nothing similar exists today. There is no interest among security policy elites or defence politicians in promoting general public debate about peace issues; further, there is little perceived need at the individual level for solid knowledge. In addition, the number of politicians in the Swedish and Danish Parliament whose political vocation and career is built on specializing in security, defence and/or peace policies is only a mere fraction of what it was 20-30 years ago.

These developments have to do with the overall change of Danish foreign policy whether under the Social Democrats or the right-wing neo-liberal coalition. Denmark has become a bomber and occupation country; it endorsed and bombed (at least a couple of nights) Serbia, it has been in favour of and military engaged in the war on Afghanistan, the occupation of Iraq (for 4 years) and fully in solidarity with the Bush administration's 'war on terror'.

In Denmark there are private foundations for social research but only the Plum Foundation is specialized in peace and human rights, and since 2008 it is inactive due to financial troubles and internal conflict. The Danish Institute for International Studies, DIIS, conducts research, seminars and publishing activities but all its research in the field of defence and security is finance by the Danish Ministry of Defence. Given the overall profile of the institute, the present author would not even consider sending a project proposal to DIIS; peace including non-violence is not on its agenda.

What about Sweden's peace funding? Well, you probably have heard of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, SIPRI, and that there are peace research institutes in Uppsala and Gothenburg. That's of course much better than the situation just described in Denmark which has neither a state institute nor any other peace research outfit.

However, if you look for Swedish funds today, you'll probably turn first to the Folke

Bernadotte Academy. It has taken over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' portfolio and contributes organizational support to Swedish NGOs of about US\$ 750,000 a year and about the same in project support, the latter however with an important self-financing limitation (see later).

This is by and large the situation in two countries – Denmark and Sweden – most people around the world would (still but mistakenly) look to as the most promising, liberal and open-minded in the field we focus on here.

One must indeed hope the peace funding situation is much better elsewhere.

Knowing how to write a funding proposal

Today's research is a macro-undertaking growing increasingly similar to corporate behaviour. The small, intimate and innovative research group that works day and night on a problem is a creature threatened with extinction for a variety of reasons. Research is no longer a 24/7 vocation, it's a 9 am-4 pm job.

An increasing proportion of researchers find themselves – or like to characterize themselves – as managers. They manage funds, staff, colleagues and projects. Nowadays it is normal to meet researchers at a state institute or university (or an NGO leader for that matter) who'll tell you that he or she is now funded by a grant from this and that source, at such and such a huge amount and what the projects structure is. Content comes second in such presentations.

Much less frequently do you meet researchers who explain with intense commitment that they are curious about ways to understand X problem and find some new solutions before it is too late for our world – or something similar. With the former, you ask yourself what the real motivation is, if any, beyond money, job security and fame in the peer group. With the latter you will be able to have an intellectually rewarding exchange on matters of substance.

Today's clever operator in the research world is one who, of course, knows his or her trade but also knows the buzzwords of grant-makers. If there is a new, politically correct term such as, say, humanitarian intervention, human security or terrorism, surprisingly many project descriptions will suddenly mention those concepts. But buzzwords come and go; 'humanitarian intervention' is by and large gone now 10 years after it was in vogue with the bombing of former Yugoslavia.

To obtain funds after 2001, it is imperative that you must shape your research application to be relevant for the "war on terror" and, thereby, implicitly accept mainstream definitions of terrorism. (President Obama may allegedly have struck "war on terror" out of the lexicon of his administration but still uses 'terrorism' as his main reason for e.g. his military surge in Afghanistan). Another phrase is conflict prevention – although conflicts in and of themselves is a sine qua non of the good society and that we should focus on is violence prevention.

One wonders when words like peace by peaceful means, non-violence, reconciliation, non-military defence become buzzwords, if ever?

Next, to be successful as fund-raiser, your project description must not only use the right words, contain a noble motivation, establish that what you intend to do is path breaking; it must also fairly precisely indicate what the expected results will be. Funders do not appreciate that their money successively goes in other directions than stipulated and stated

in the grant proposal; thus the typical question about the expected research results. Most funding agencies will tell you that the rules of the game is either no change in the project or, if change must be made, consult with them in advance and risk paying back what you have received.

This militates against every creativity and innovation, against the fundamentally important idea that research is about finding the yet unfound, to stumble upon new interesting problems, to see openings through a creative trial-and-error, etc. All this is the opposite of the corporate-like process characterizing today's research mode.

Anyone in our field has met scores of researchers jokingly telling you that a) they had to adapt their project to what the likely grant-makers wanted to see, and b) that they had to conduct most of the research work before they could submit the actual project with their budget.

So to get your project funded, you must know what funders want and either for real turn your research in that direction or make it look like this is what you have already done (in spite of facts to the contrary). In addition, you must know by and large what the results of your search and re-search is likely to be.

This being so, it is conveniently overlooked by both grant-seeker and grant-maker, that it is the latter who calls the shots and shapes what is being researched, not the genuine search, creativity or the individual research processes by individuals alone or in small groups, not to mention certain global problems the urgency of which ought to justify much larger funding than research that benefits violence.

Many important problems and their solution, about which we know rather little, will remain starved for as long as these funding priorities prevail.

If you obtain funds, then what?

Let's assume that you obtain a grant for your project. That's where another set of problems emerges. One is that it all becomes pretty boring for the researcher and structurally inflexible. The project is already half-ways done, the rest is about keeping on track, certain data have to be "stuffed in" to fit the predicted conclusions; research managers are loath to open up discussions with the funding agency; that could potentially put future funding at risk. Thus changes, new knowledge - searching for the unpredicted - is implicitly if not explicitly discouraged.

Another is project administration. Large-scale funders like, say, the European Union today require so comprehensive and frequent reports and accounting that it requires staff exclusively to feed the funder's insatiable appetite for such paper work. And not only that, you must adhere to their methods, use the software they require (purchase and educate yourself in it as you are not likely to have it available because you are a researcher, not a bureaucrat).

A third factor to be reckoned with is the trend that the project-owner must first conduct parts of the work before being reimbursed by the funding agency; that is, the institute must, out of its own pockets, finance at least parts of the project first, then hand in all the activity and economic reports and accounting sheets and then get compensation - 100% or less - depending on whether or not the strict administrative and economic rules of the funding

agency have been met. Imagine they have not and what you think were outlays are now converted to your institute's expenses: if not very big and able to absorb such economic blows, your institute could well face bankruptcy.

A fourth is overhead versus self-financing. Two-three decades ago when I used to write project proposals, it was perfectly normal to add 15-25 per cent on top of the project sum as overhead, i.e. paying the natural day-to-day extra costs that your institute had to carry due to the project being conducted there - typically, telephones, faxes, copying, rooms, insurance and the like.

But times have changed. One of the latest grants TFF has received (for its project on peace education and reconciliation with the Amahoro Youth Club in Burundi) was from the mentioned Folke Bernadotte Academy. Although we received much less than we applied for - a not uncommon fact of this type of life - we were happy that we did secure some funding.

However, the sum transferred to our bank account was the total grant sum we had been informed about minus 10%. It turned out that:

1. Funding required that the foundation itself financed 10% of the project costs;
2. The savings that would be made from the fact that I myself in the role of unpaid project director over two years could not be accepted as self-financing;
3. Self-financing was defined as expenses documented by receipts to the amount of 10 per cent of the grant sum-total, and d) overheads defined as in the good old days were not accepted in any way

In most cases, the costs for auditing - in the interest of only the grant-maker - must be borne by the project-maker, not the grant-maker. If you obtain, say, 50% of the funds you applied for and must cut down a series of items and activities, this is not one you can scrap. You are obliged to hand in, as part of the reporting, the accounts with the auditor's signature. For smaller projects, this can be a non-negligible sum.

What are the consequences of such structures and rules?

One is that smaller research organizations such as TFF simply can neither afford nor take the risks of committing themselves to paying parts of a project for which there is no prior budget, particularly if donations make up an important part of the economic basis.

Secondly, some will learn how to circumvent such rules and fake costs. Third, bureaucratic considerations will, sooner or later, take the upper hand and will shape the content of the project and its implementation. There goes freedom...

Countless are the times when the researcher can see the benefit of doing things one way - simple - but has to do it in complicated ways much less benefiting to partners and the search for knowledge itself because one thing cannot be discussed, much less changed: the rules of the funding game.

At the slightest questioning by the researcher, the funding agency will tell you that it has these rules, that they in turn are object of ever stricter inspection by higher-up authorities and can not give you any special treatment or accept deviation (even if they would). You may of course freely decide to follow them or look for funds elsewhere.

Given certain features of the grant-seeker, the type of projects being conducted in the field of peace, security, non-violence etc. and, not the least, the comparatively tiny-tiny sums involved, it is possible to distinguish between common sense control and bizarre excessive control, reporting and administration – bordering on obsession and treating any researcher as a potential cheater. In addition, there is a considerable self-regulation in this community since every grant-recipient is fully aware that it will prevent him or her from ever applying for funds in the future if funds are mismanaged.

Where such excessive control moves in, creativity, the compassionate wish to do something good for the world, the personal, human impulse goes out. The next section illustrates some of these feature of real research life: 75 % of the project time spent on satisfying bureaucratic regulations, 25 % left to ease the integration process of asylum seekers an refugees into the Swedish society.

And then there is this factor: After the terrorist concern – some may say hysteria – in the wake of September 11, 2001, many funding agencies particularly in the U.S. are hesitant to give money for international projects or organizations abroad in the field of international policy. They would rather not give than risk that research funds fall into the hands of ‘terrorists.’

That this is totally bizarre in the case of research on peace, peace-making, non-violence and forgiveness does not prevent it from being part of today’s reality. And this is even truer for those whose funding proposals deal with studies of conflicts and war zones and include conducting field studies in such places.

Finally – and perhaps more regrettable than anything else: The typical major funding agency that devotes all its energy to bureaucratic control and reporting work seldom show even the slightest interest in the results of the research or responds to publications submitted as part of the result.

Where bureaucracy and politics occupy the whole floor, intellectualism and substance has long walked out the door.

An project illustrating the malaise

We have given you small examples here and there. Now follows a short description of our experience with a recent “never-again” project directed by Christina Spännar, PhD and co-founder of TFF, together with Vibeke Bing, social worker, author and TFF Associate entitled Integration Into Sweden: How can we improve it for refugees and immigrants? What promotes and what hampers it? You can read about it here:

http://www.transnational.org/SAJT/forum/meet/2006/Spannar_Eslov-EnglishSum.html

Christina Spännar writes:

Project Frozen Feet – an illustrative example

“Frozen Feet” took its point of departure in our project “Integration into Sweden: How can we improve it for refugees and immigrants? What promotes and what hampers it?” funded by ERF, the European Refugee Fund.

One of its conclusions was that so-called ‘warm places’, where genuine human encounters can take place help promote integration. The intention of “Frozen Feet” was to analyse a few of these ‘warm places’ in depth and find out what was happening there and how more immigrants could find their way into them.

Preparations for the new project took about year. This included finding co-financiers mostly amongst the local authorities in the nearby city of Malmoe and the small town of Esloev, where the first project was conducted. Financing by these authorities was in the form of employees’ working-time spent on “Frozen Feet”, the so called specially financed costs. The economic value of this generated cash money from ERF through the Swedish Migrationsverket (the Migration Authority) to pay for the direct costs of the project, such as salaries for the two project leaders, travel costs etc.

Maximum 50 % of the project’s total costs could be covered by ERF. Should the total costs become lower due to less than promised co-financing, so would the ERF funding to pay the direct costs for salaries etc. This is understandable. But I find it absurd that the same applies if the co-financing become higher than promised. As if the value of working time at one place of work could pay the salaries at another. The whole thing becomes even more grotesque when the project runs over two years, financed from ERF money-bags from different years. Thus, you are not allowed to balance for example a deficit from the first year of the project with a surplus the second year.

Unfortunately, as project co-director I didn’t fully realize the extent of the sharpening of the rules of administration and control that was put into practice for ERF II compared to ERF I. During our first project, also running over 20 months, the obligation was to render accounts and a report at half-time. During this second – and definitely last – ERF- funded project accounts should be rendered and reports written four times plus a balancing report between the two years.

Another new invention was the time reporting; every participant had to fill in for every half hour on what activity they spent time on the project! Since neither the size of the project nor of TFF allowed a special project administrator, this work fell on me as the only full time project leader.

My calculation reveals that I spent 75 % of my work time on administration and reporting, rather than on improving the lot for immigrants into Sweden.

During ERF I the economic value of work done by the project owner was approved of as idealistic work, but not so during ERF II. Had it been, we could have done a lot more, since the value of my unpaid work was more than 200 000 SEK (US \$ 26.500) during the 20 months and could have generated the same amount of funding from ERF. But this would have increased the problem of not being reimbursed until 3-4 months after the end of the project. Thus, another discouragement from ever applying for funds again.

To me the rules of ERF/EU represent one big hindrance to projects instead of support to them. It is as if they have thought of the Sicilian mafia when making them – since you are systematically treated as a potential criminal by all authorities.

This also strikes Migrationsverket where at no point there was even a hint of interest in the substance of the projects, only a concentration on accounting and reporting technicalities and details. Also, during the first project, the Migration Authority had a project person who could always be consulted during the course of the project. Due to its re-organisation and budget cuts, there was no such person available during “Frozen Feet”.

Neither I myself nor TFF as a small independent research foundation will ever again embark on such a bureaucratic project where those who should benefit from its results are effectively prevented from doing so, no matter how hard both they and we tried.

Conclusions for more debate – and a word about TFF’s future

The absurd imbalance in global funds available for peace and for violence research has been bad enough and, regrettably, also shows no movement towards even a reasonable balance. If those in control understood and wanted peace, it would look differently.

What we witness is political priorities and an attitude that militates fundamentally against the liberal ethos of freedom of knowledge, competition on good arguments and “may the best man win”.

It’s a generalised truth – thus with a few exceptions – that people in power thrive from citizens not knowing too much, having their attention diverted to lesser matters and entertainment if possible and to not being challenged in any fundamental sense.

Thus, peace research in a militarized world is by definition – and ought to be, we may add – a controversial thing. But less so, one would believe, in a liberal than in an authoritarian system. Is the West becoming authoritarian, an inflexible colossus permitting increasingly only one paradigm rather than pluralism?

The framework surrounding modern research funding agencies, research institutes and projects and their features amount to an increasingly insurmountable, preventive barrier against the essential meanings of search and re-search.

We have limited the exposé to the field of peace research described here and offered some concrete examples admittedly based on our own experience with a small, independent research outfit such as TFF over a period of about a quarter of a century.

Imagine that the trends described above are let to continue unabated and free research will disappear. No research is possible without funding, and funding policies and structures in the field of peace – and other fields? – are largely an impediment to the search and re-search itself.

The desired, imagined liberal society has already fallen prey to the authoritarian ethos of Western culture in the post-Modern, post-Cold War era. It doesn’t believe that it needs knowledge, perspectives or solid research about peace, it doesn’t seem to be aware of the need to learn. The West teaches everybody – about democracy, human rights, economy, etc. However, it seem that its self-understanding is completely embedded in the MIMAC, the Military-Industrial-Media-Academic Complex. Worse, it doesn’t seem to see it.

TFF was established in 1985. We have survived and continued only in spite of all these trends. We would not dare start TFF with the rules of the game that exist today, 24 years later. Neither will the foundation be able to continue for long unless civil society – people –

step in to a much larger extent. Perhaps as many as 99,9% help finance the military over the tax bill. It doesn't make sense to be pro-peace and only support the military and never peace.

TFF has survived only because we are small, privately housed, all-volunteer (i.e. no one gets any salary or honorarium) and a bunch of hard-headed idealists having made our careers through other systems and our income by related activities such as teaching, writing and consulting.

We will be extinct too one day. The moment will largely depend on our human energy and on donations made by people worldwide, citizens who believe we are needed precisely because they believe in free research for free speech and in peace – and because they know that we will never embed TFF in corporate models and political correctness or waiver in our commitment to peace by peaceful means.

In spite of the writing on the wall, we at TFF hope to be supported enough to stay around for some more years.

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