The Predicament of Commissioned Research

By Hans Blom

Although commissioned research is not in itself unusual, it raises the question of how to safeguard the independence of inquiry, especially when moral, political or newsworthy issues are at stake. As the party placing the commission and other parties involved may have interests in the outcome of the inquiry, attempting to intervene in the inquiry is not inconceivable. While this is inadmissible in light of the independent nature of the inquiry, neither is it possible to cut off contact with the commissioning party: a good working relationship can be crucial to the research. In contrast to the humanities departments of most universities, the NIOD often faces these dilemmas in its research assignments.

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