

Fondation Fermi-Bostrom

Headquarters: Marseilles, France, Earth, Sol, Core

Mission Statement: To investigate and ameliorate threats to the survival of the human species.

Products/services: Consulting on existential risk, historical and strategic information

Languages: French and English

Culture: Open, willing to think about the unthinkable, "big picture", pessimistic

Staff Levels: 300 directly employed, sponsoring and hiring 5,000 researchers, analysts and trouble-shooters.

Scope of Operation: Throughout human space, concentrated to Core, Stark and the Eber Finger

Motto: "It is not inevitable"



Xenoarcheological foundation and policy think tank concerned about species survival. Of the 12 known intelligent species four (Ebers, Kafers, Humans, Little Guys) have suffered nuclear wars that nearly wiped them out and three species (Aquilans, Medusae, the Enemy) appear to be extinct. Given the lack of visible megascale engineering in the galaxy and lack of evidence for prehistoric contact with aliens the apparent density of intelligent species in the solar neighbourhood appears to imply that few species survive for long. "The Great Filter", whatever causes galaxy-spanning or -changing cultures not to occur, cannot be due to the unlikelihood of life or intelligence evolving, but must be a threat to technological civilizations.

The Fermi-Bostrom Foundation was founded in 2256. The Slaver war had recently ended and communication with the Ebers confirmed that they had been a spacefaring race. Several philosophers and xenobiologists were growing worried by the evidence that intelligence was not as rare as it had been believed. They convinced a number of philanthropists to fund the foundation to explore threats to humanity. The name was taken from two early pioneers in the study of extraterrestrial life and species survival.

The first four decades were periods of quiet work. Researchers funded by the Foundation compiled information about the Eber final war and its aftermath, interviewed Sung and human historians about past disasters and analysed major weaknesses in human society. Some of the reports were well received, like suggestions for handling breaches of OQC quarantine protocols, safeguards against relativistic missile attacks, international protocols for diverting dangerous asteroids and the establishment of off-system gene banks.

Recently the Foundation has grown far larger than originally envisioned. As the Kafer war broke out governments, think tanks and the public began to take threats to human survival seriously. Old reports about the risks of massive interstellar warfare were dusted off and FFB members were suddenly in hot demand for committees everywhere. The discovery of the Medusae, their Enemy, the Little Guys and finally the Aquilans reinforced the conviction among many decision makers that there were real threats out there. Funding has boomed and FFB has become influential as more and more people turn to it for answers about how to survive in the long run.

The headquarters are located in Marseille, an office complex on the Université de Provence Aix-Marseille IV campus. The university specializes in interstellar sciences, and many of the foundation-funded researchers work here. Current research areas include modelling the long-range sociology of intelligent species, theoretical studies of the space of possible technologies, compiling mass extinction records for all surveyed biospheres, Kafer war strategy studies and elaborate disaster simulations. The foundation also does consulting work as an additional source of funding.

There is some worry inside the organisation that it is becoming overextended. The influx of money and influence has made it expand far too quickly. Old-timers think that the big picture might be lost in the abundance of discoveries being made and the eagerness of impressing politicians.

So far the organisation has not converged on any big recipe for saving humanity (and is not trying to). It promotes proven solutions like distributing mankind and its resources broadly, setting up early warning systems for known threats, international treaties and organisations to handle global threats and, of course, deeper studies of known and unknown threats. The quiet fear of FFB is that obviously other many species must have had similar thoughts, and it did not save them. That is in itself an intriguing problem to solve, perhaps the deepest challenge to FFB.

Alien Relations

FFB has worked with Sung historians for a long time, getting excellent access to libraries and scholarly research in a fortuitous quid-pro-quo program. There exists a Sung “copycat” organisation in Atcheektoon, the quasi-academic-quasi-governmental Tarreen-Sorranah-Kee (literally “Nestcity Safe-Making Group”) that tries to safeguard Sung survival. FFB and Tarreen-Sorranah-Kee often work together.

Work with Ebers has been slower both due to the alien’s ponderous social life but also due to Manchurian interference. The Kormoran research group has still published the so far most authoritative database of everything that is known about the Eber Final War (*A Fire along the River: The Eber Final War*, ed. Alexander Cousot, Publications de l’Universite de Provence Aix-Marseille 2310).

FFB is somewhat frustrated by the Pentapods. Ever since the organisation was founded they have been trying to learn useful history from the aliens, but to their chagrin they discovered that the Pentapods do not have any history, written or oral. They are eager to help, but their only advice for long-range survival is to trust that the gods will adapt, evolve and overcome.

The Kafer research has so far been mostly theoretical: it is too dangerous to get close to the aliens. Konteradmiral Lutke’s genocide has changed the outlook, though. Not only might the occupied Kafer homeworld be xenoarcheologically very important, but studying the reaction of the Kafers to the genocide would provide extremely important data. A strong debate is going on among the FFB leadership on whether to fund a high-risk-high-gain program in Kafer space.

FFB is also very intrigued by reports that the Ylii have a 100,000-year history: they might give valuable hints on how to survive and mature as a species. The foundation is lobbying the US for having a research team sent to the Ylii to investigate their history and society in detail.

While the Little Guys are popular in the Core, FFB regards their tragedy as being a relatively well-understood nuclear annihilation threat. FFB funds some personnel in the relief program, but do not expect much new. Instead they are looking for more evidence of the Medusae and The Enemy, the so far only widely star-faring species discovered. They have announced sizeable rewards for new finds. Finally, the Aquilans pose so many important questions that many FFB leaders think that they should be the top priority, not the Kafers.

Human Relations

FFB gets along well with most other research-oriented NGOs, especially NARL, Academia dei Lincei and IEX. FFB and OQC has a more cool relationship, as the foundation has consistently criticized the methods and scope of OQC – although they are in favour of vastly extending the organization to encompass most of human space, they also demand a complete revamping of its internal structure and charter. Given the new influence of FFB some OQC commanders are worried, and have begun launching political counterattacks.

FFB has for a long time held a cosy relationship with France. This has seriously hampered their relationship with Manchuria, which has more than once claimed FFB to be little more than an espionage organization seeking to safeguard France's survival rather than humanity's. This has caused endless trouble for researchers being sent to Stark and the Eber worlds. The solution has been to fund independent researchers, act through other NGOs, or even to set up "dummy" foundations so that zealous officials do not immediately recognize the employer of a researcher.

The foundation has been involved in Twilight War studies, something that has occasionally caused trouble. Much of the real history got embedded in national myths during the reconstruction age, and questioning them occasionally ruffles the feathers. Some FFB researchers got into hot water recently in Ukraine for demonstrating that the death toll during the "national reconstruction struggle" had been misrepresented as nuclear victims.

Adventure possibilities

The FFB hires researchers, troubleshooters and other people who are useful to investigate evidence of past extinctions of intelligent species or other forms of interstellar dangers (like the Kimanjano superflare). Most are pure academics like philosophers, xenobiologists, xenohistorians, xenoarchaeologists and xenosociologists, but they also need military theorists and engineers. People are also needed for protection, managing local governments and documentation. FFB also hires Sung and Ebers.

FFB might sponsor into Beta Aquila space, trying to get better information about when Aquilan habitats were abandoned and whether there is evidence of any kind of disaster that drove them away – or that they fled to avoid something.

FFB personnel could be sent to Gamma Serpenti to investigate Kafer history and the recent genocide. Investigating the archaeology and history of a planet still largely inhabited by violent xenophobic aliens is dangerous enough, but sociological and xenobiological studies of the Kafers might reveal certain uncomfortable secrets. Poking into and documenting

mankinds latest atrocity might also cause big trouble with the military – but it is the closest anybody can come to a controlled experiment in species extinction.

Digging deep: researchers at the FFB are interested in population statistics and strategic policy from just before the Twilight War. They hire the PCs to go to a variety of remote places to dig up or buy old data collections. This can involve digging down to buried bunkers under Semipalatinsk to get source code printouts for the Perimetr missile defence (and who knows what else might exist in old Soviet archives), dealing with the Library of Congress archaeological dig or finding where MilGov hid its archives as the US reunified.

Take me to your leader: An FFB expedition to Ylii might lead to some extremely surprising findings for both species. So far the Australian and American researchers among the Ylii have looked at their recent history and been trying to understand their society. Doing some real archaeology and asking intelligent questions might reveal some of Ylii's older and darker history.

Treasure hunt: the PCs are sent to a colony world where it is claimed that Medusan or Enemy artefacts have been discovered. Are they real? Are the people who found them trustworthy? What about competing searches? Does the artefacts hint at a danger not merely past but active?

X marks the spot: FFB research indicates a past super-disaster that killed off much life within at least 30 lightyears from the source. Fossil records, geology and other data from many different systems, combined with estimates of how the stars have moved in the past, suggest that it originated at or near an apparently unimportant red dwarf star in the vicinity of human space. Together with the ARI they launch an expedition to find out what has happened. Is there a neutron star in a peculiar orbit around the star, occasionally absorbing gas from it so that it triggers a nova occasionally? A hidden black hole? A completely new astrophysical phenomenon? Some ancient alien superweapon? Maybe the red dwarf is actually a normal star hidden inside a Dyson shell by an advanced civilization.

The Infiltrators: One explanation for the transience of intelligent civilizations might be that there is *something* out there sabotaging them. It would need to be widely dispersed, good at blending in and then work discreetly to bring about ruin. Most FFB researchers find the theory unlikely and paranoid, but it is easier to fit with the facts than just assuming technological civilizations easily wipe themselves out. Some FFB researchers might want to test the infiltrator hypothesis, involving the PCs in the hunt for infiltrators. But if they exist, wouldn't FFB be one of the key places to infiltrate?

Duck and Cover: FFB is supporting a secret project of building redoubts to enable some humans to survive in the case of a global catastrophe. The main sponsor might be one or more major governments, a political movement or a paranoid private philanthropist. The redoubts are built in remote parts of space, equipped with gene banks, information libraries and living space for a few hundred people. The goal is to allow humans to re-emerge once the danger has passed and rebuild civilisation. If the PCs are involved in building the redoubt they will have to maintain secrecy, keep nosy or opportunistic locals away. PCs might also be hired to test it out with other volunteers for a set period of time. To make the test realistic the responsible analysts arrange things so that it really looks like a disaster has happened and they are stranded. Secret monitoring equipment study how they deal with global disaster.

FFB researchers have been arrested for espionage by Manchurian colonial authorities. The local authorities are trying to score points with the central government and are doing their best to frame the researchers. The PCs are hired to free them – legally, or in some other way. Conversely, the PCs could be Manchurian intelligence trying to investigate what the FFB is really up to. Maybe Manchuria *is* right and there is something weird going on in the foundation – what are those redoubts, wargames and secret contacts with aliens really about?

The Illuminati: Senior FFB experts know about the top-secret Bayern findings in the Pleiades cluster. The existence of a supercivilization is in a way reassuring, because it shows that at least *one* species has managed to survive for a long time. This is important for overall FFB research but cannot be taken into account due to the top-secret nature of AGRA. One side of FFB wants to find a way of making this information public (ideally by having someone unconnected to the organisation discover it or “leak” it). Another side worries that as long as humanity fears for its survival it will behave itself: a reduction in threat might make humanity more reckless, and of course reduce funding for FFB. They would like to keep AGRA a secret for as long as possible.