



**Alice Pannier.** *Rivals in Arms: The Rise of UK-France Defence Relations in the Twenty-First Century.* Human Dimensions in Foreign Policy, Military Studies, and Security Studies Series. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020. Illustrations, tables. 272 pp. \$32.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-228-00356-4.

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**Published on** H-War (December, 2021)

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### **An Interest in Alliance**

The 2010 Lancaster House Treaties created a new agenda for cooperation between the United Kingdom and France. Alice Pannier's *Rivals in Arms* seeks to explore theories of bilateral cooperation in "special relationships" using the author's experience embedded within the French Ministry of Defence and contacts in both the British and French governments. "Special relationships" are unique bilateral relations defined by durable cooperation and a willingness to overcome the natural barriers to cooperative efforts in an anarchic international system. In other words, "special relationships" aim to establish a national interest in maintaining an alliance as opposed to maintaining an alliance to defend a national interest.

Across three cases of cooperative projects initiated to fulfill the ambitions of the Lancaster House Treaties, Pannier outlines the barriers to cooperation faced by both governments. The origins of those barriers in differing national interests, coordination problems, relative gains competition, and relations with external partners are revealed by the analysis of the UK-France cooperation efforts. In doing so, Pannier contributes a new model for studying bilateral cooperation and the

challenges to it. Scholars of international relations and foreign policy practitioners alike will find the book a useful guide to understanding bilateral cooperation generally and the specific policies of defense cooperation between the United Kingdom and France.

The findings provide micro-level foundations for the neoclassical realist view of bilateral relations and show the limits of liberal institutionalist theories in the observed cases. Instead of a pattern of adaptive learning through institutional links toward diffuse reciprocity, the United Kingdom and France continued to treat their cooperation as a quid pro quo relationship. Although the process of institutional learning helps stabilize the cooperative relationship, it never overcomes the structural barriers to cooperation between two sovereign states.

Pannier's depth of experience in the French Ministry of Defence produces rich qualitative data that validates the inferences she draws regarding UK-France cooperation. As political science literature has increasingly favored the use of statistics for causal inference, it is refreshing to see work that reminds one of the value of qualitative meth-

odological approaches. However, the intense focus on one relationship leaves room for doubt about the generalizability to other cases of bilateral cooperation. The “special relationship” between France and the United Kingdom is distinct from many bilateral arrangements outside of the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization that are not embedded within multilateral institutions. Other “special relationships,” such as the one between Russia and India, may have differing experiences as a result of the lack of opportunities for cooperation fostered by multilateral institutions or conversely may face fewer barriers because multilateral entanglement can offer alternative partners that inhibit bilateral cooperation. While this limits the ability to generalize some of the findings to other bilateral arrangements, it does not weaken the descriptive work that defines the challenges to cooperation or the falsification of some of the institutionalist hypotheses in the observed cases. Future scholars have the opportunity to adopt the framework provided by Pannier to evaluate the generalizability of the UK-France case and defenders of institutionalist theories must grapple with the inability to establish diffuse reciprocity and the failure to shield the relationship from domestic politics or external partners in what ought to be an ideal case for effective bilateral cooperation.

Pannier explores three cases of defense cooperation in detail: the 2011 intervention in Libya, the development of a Comprehensive Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF), and the effort to integrate defense industries. In doing so, she examines the efficacy of cooperative efforts at a variety of levels of national security planning: the deployment of force in a crisis, force planning, and future budget and asset priorities. Pannier’s analysis does not draw explicit analytical distinctions between the areas of cooperation and challenges specific to them, instead each case is subject to a mix of coordination problems, barriers originating from differing national interests, and the option to pursue cooperation with external partners. None is

therefore entirely solvable through institutional adaptation, since differences in interests and concerns with relative gains will remain. Adaptation then often is shown as working within the constraints of differing national interests. That in turn means that adaptation often consists of limiting goals and adopting new narratives that affirm the spirit of cooperation even as the initial aims become unachievable.

One of the strengths of *Rivals in Arms* is its policy relevance. Pannier elucidates the sources of failure in domestic politics and high-level directives for cooperation that lacked plans for implementation. By highlighting cooperation failures and successful adaptations, mechanisms of effective cooperation are made apparent to a policy-oriented audience, but so is the need for continued domestic political will. Numerous interventions by the heads of state were required to keep defense industry cooperation and the CJEF on track. However, as Pannier explains, even political support for cooperation did not stop Britain from pursuing closer coordination with the United States in Libya or France from pursuing defense industry cooperation with Germany when it was more suitable to their interests.

*Rivals in Arms* is explicitly focused on theories of bilateral cooperation, but how cooperation between the United Kingdom and France implicates the politics of the European Union and the prospects for an integrated defense policy will not go unnoticed by astute readers. Though not explicitly addressed, the failure to establish diffuse reciprocity in the relationship and a consistent fear of relative losses despite the structural advantages to their special relationship ought to sour views of the prospects for EU defense integration. The European Union is shown to be a useful institution for bilateral cooperation, since Brexit has led to the loss of EU research funding for joint UK-France defense projects, removed forums for cooperation, and shifted strategic goals. However, shared institutional membership cannot yet over-

come fundamental barriers to cooperation that emerge between sovereign states with their own domestic politics and foreign policy goals.

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**Citation:** Samuel Leiter. Review of Pannier, Alice. *Rivals in Arms: The Rise of UK-France Defence Relations in the Twenty-First Century*. H-War, H-Net Reviews. December, 2021.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56865>



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