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Book review

Airspace Closure and Civil Aviation: A Strategic Resource for Airline Managers by Steven D. Jaffe, 2015, Farnham: Ashgate (£70.00 (Hardback), ISBN: 9781472413000).

The book "Airspace Closure and Civil Aviation: A Strategic Resource for Airline Managers" by Steven D. Jaffe gives a broad overview of the airspace constraints that the airline industry has been facing in the past and present. To begin with, it should be pointed out that the title of the book is slightly misleading using the word "closure", while in the book itself the chapters refer to "constraints". While some might argue this is just a matter of semantics, "closure" is much more drastic than "constraints" and indeed the book mainly discusses airspace constraints that do not always include full airspace closures. As such, a title "Airspace Constraints and Civil Aviation" might have better reflected the content of the book and also the challenges that airlines have been facing over the last decades.

The book consists of seven chapters, covering technological, geographic, market development, regulatory, political and security constraints as well as an analysis and conclusion chapter. This logical structure enables the book to cover a wide range of airspace constraints that affect the industry, making it a good source for anyone who needs to get a broad understanding of these issues. The book draws upon examples from around the world, giving it a good geographic spread and a good coverage of geographic particularities and global commonalities that airlines face.

Chapter 1 refers to technological constraints. This chapter is by far the longest chapter of the book covering issues related to the aircraft itself as well as air traffic management. Unlike many of the other chapters, readers without any prior basic knowledge of air traffic management might find this chapter a bit challenging and difficult to contextualise. This chapter also highlights one challenge for the book, and perhaps the subject matter per se: it is difficult to discuss airspace issues as discrete constraints as many constraints are interlinked. For example, this chapter highlights the airspace constraints resulting from military operations (a topic that also relates to political issues) or regulatory requirements for polar flights (an issue that also falls in the regulatory domain). In Chapter 2, the author discusses the geographic constraints in air transport, including airport location, terrain, temperatures and natural disasters. This chapter is of particular interest to readers of this journal, yet at the same time, in comparison to the first chapter, the coverage on geographic constraints is rather short. Particularly interesting in this chapter is the impact of volcanic ash on airlines and how different airlines have addressed this issue. The third chapter discusses the market development constraints, for example focusing on certain routes as well as the role of ultra-longhaul routes. Again, this chapter shows its link to technological advances that have enabled these latter routes, but also shows that market demand can impede airlines from benefitting from these aircraft developments. This is the shortest chapter and readers with an interest in airline networks and economics will find this chapter too short. Chapters 4 and 5 cover regulatory and political constraints respectively. The chapter on political constraints gives an especially good overview and provides interesting examples from around the world. While some examples may seem dated (e.g. the case of South African Airways), these examples perfectly illustrate how the sector has changed over time and what obstacles airlines had to address in the past. This chapter highlights the global nature of the industry as well as the global reach of this book. Although overall an insightful chapter, in some parts towards the end, it feels like the author lost focus as the chapter surprisingly covers earthquakes (already partly discussed in a previous chapter) and fuel contamination – it is difficult to follow why this is covered under "political" constraints. The penultimate chapter looks into security constraints. Security is one of the key focus areas in recent years and as such is constantly evolving. Therefore, there is a danger that this chapter will soon be outdated. Nevertheless, this part gives a good account of some of the developments in this area, such as MANPADS (man-portable air-defense systems).

The final analysis and conclusion chapter would have been a good opportunity to bring together the key issues and provide potential solutions. While this is achieved to some extent, overall this final part feels more like a summary and therefore a bit repetitive, particularly when it comes to topics that have been discussed on several occasions throughout the book.

The book is very industry-focussed with an ample range of examples that make it easy to read and understand, with perhaps the first chapter being an exception. Readers with a deeper understanding in any of the subjects covered in the book might find that the chapters are too superficial. However, for anyone looking to get an overview of the key issues related to airspace constraints, this book will be a valuable resource for understanding the developments over time and the current challenges. It will be especially useful to final year undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as airline managers moving into airline management from other industries. Experienced airline managers and researchers who are familiar with air transport developments will find this book a welcome reminder of some special cases in air transport (e.g. the role of polar routes, political constraints in Africa and the Middle East), however they will most likely find little new information or discussions. Overall, Steven D. Jaffe's book addresses areas that are not frequently covered in literature and therefore is a useful guide to past and current issues faced by airlines regarding airspace constraints.

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