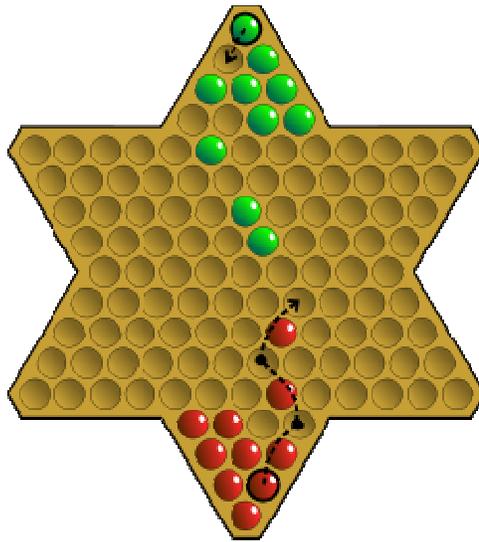


Getting a visa for the UK is “torture with a system judged the worst in Europe. Perhaps stupidest of all is how we treat the Chinese.” [Ian Birrell, the Guardian, 14/5/12](#)

Chinese



Checkers



A HACAN publication exposing the myth that it is a lack of capacity at Heathrow that is the real deterrent to Chinese businesses investing in the UK

September 2012

The Chinese aren't coming

In 2010:

109,000 Chinese tourists visited Britain

511,000 visited Germany

907,000 visited France

UN World Tourism Organisation's latest annual figures. The exact figures are disputed but not the trend.

The potential market is huge

The World Tourism Organisation predicts that the number of overseas trips made by Chinese people will surge from 70m last year to **100m** by the end of the decade, from just **5m** 15 years ago.

The visa system is also deterring business:

Willie Walsh, the boss of International Airlines Group, parent company of British Airways, has been vocal in his condemnation of the regime as bad for business, after being told repeatedly on a trade mission to China by businessmen how hard it was to get a visa.

Adam Marshall, of the British Chambers of Commerce: "Ministers say they want Britain to be open for business. They need to ensure that the visa regime doesn't undermine the goal of increased exports, tourism, and trade."



A 3rd runway would solve the problem?

It is irrelevant to the visa problem.

Unlike Willie Walsh and Adam Marshall, some in business have a tendency to skate over the visa problem and the bi-lateral agreement and imply that a third runway at Heathrow would solve the problem. Here's John Cridland, the director-general of the CBI (1):

And it's not just visas.....

There is a **bi-lateral agreement*** between mainland China and the UK which limits the number of flights to 62 per week between the two nations.

“Right now, our major airports are losing out to other European destinations. We have no links at all with many of the major Chinese cities. Businesses don't want the main UK aviation hub to become Schiphol or Frankfurt.”

There are three points to be made in response to this:

- 1. It is market forces at work.** It is hardly surprising that France and Germany have more links to mainland China given the fact so many more Chinese people travel to them. This is the market catering for the demand. If you include Hong Kong, the UK has more flights to China – again market forces.
- 2. London remains the top city in Europe for business.** The reasons are perhaps best summarized in the annual, and influential, survey, carried out by global property consultants Cushman & Wakefield, *The European Cities Monitor* (2). In 2011, it found London topped the league for the 22nd year out of 22. Cushman & Wakefield commented: “London is still ranked – by some distance from its closest competitors – as the leading city in which to do business.” London owes its position to its excellent links to the rest of the world. It has the best external and internal transport and best telecommunications.
- 3. Travel patterns will start to change.** Given the opposition to the building new airports in Europe, patterns of travel will change. Major airports like Heathrow will shed some of their short-haul traffic to concentrate on long-distance intercontinental travel while China and other fast-industrializing countries will build and use their own hubs. It is inconceivable that any European airport will serve a significant number of second-tier cities in China.

The conclusion is that, in order to benefit from Chinese tourism and business investment, both the visa problem and the bi-lateral agreement need to be sorted.

References:

- (1) <http://www.abtn.co.uk/news/2717158-cbi-puts-pressure-government-over-air-capacity>
- (2) https://www.cushwake.com/cwglobal/docviewer/2120_ECM_2011_FINAL_10Oct.pdf?id=c5050000
- * http://www2.tech.purdue.edu/at/courses/at300/bilateral_agreements_and_the_sev.htm

Other useful articles:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2012/may/14/visa-heathrow-immigration-torture>
Ian Birrell, Guardian, 14/5/12

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/17/visas-deter-chinese-tourists>
Gwyn Topham Guardian, 17/8/12

This pamphlet was written and designed by John Stewart for HACAN which represents residents under the Heathrow flights. We can be contacted at info@hacan.org.uk; 020 8876 0455; www.hacan.org.uk