

POLICY BRIEF

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FOOTBALL DIPLOMACY

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

While Australian governments have successfully built pragmatic ties with Asian leaders, a popular dimension to our engagement with Asia has in many respects been missing. This didn't matter greatly in the past, but today public opinion is increasingly a factor in foreign policy. Governments must influence individuals as well as elites to address global problems such as terrorism and disease and 'branding' has become critical to a state's ability to attract trade, investment and international political support. But a new opportunity to deepen people-to-people links with Asia has arrived in the form of Australia's recent admission into the Asian Football Confederation. For the first time, Australia will have a significant sporting relationship with Asia. The question is, how can Australia best use this opportunity to enhance its regional image and engagement?

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Here are five ideas for how government, business and the broader community might leverage Australia's new sporting relationship with Asia:

- *Football Federation Australia (FFA) should work with business and government to establish a 'Football Asia Council' to coordinate commercial, cultural, and public diplomacy programs with Australian participation in Asian football competitions.*
- *FFA, business and government should launch a coordinated effort through this Council to develop football-based tourism and travel.*
- *Austrade should establish a 'Football Business Club Australia' to facilitate commercial networking opportunities during matches between Australian and Asian teams. FFA should also consider initiating a tri-nations series with Japan and South Korea, providing an opportunity for greater commercial, cultural, and political engagement with these key countries.*
- *FFA and government should launch a football development program with Indonesia to enhance Australia's public diplomacy effort in that country.*
- *The government and business should use sponsorship of Australian football teams playing in Asia as a part of a campaign to raise HIV/AIDS awareness in the region.*



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- produce distinctive research and fresh policy options for Australia's international policy and to contribute to the wider international debate.
- promote discussion of Australia's role in the world by providing an accessible and high quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

Lowy Institute Policy Briefs are designed to address a particular, current policy issue and to suggest solutions. They are deliberately prescriptive, specifically addressing two questions: What is the problem? What should be done?

The views expressed in this paper are the author's own and not those of the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

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Introduction

On 10 September 2005, Australia officially became the 46th member of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). From 1 January, 2006, Australian national and club teams will play in a range of AFC competitions. Most significantly for Australian football, the national team will now compete in Asian qualifiers for the World Cup, providing the national team with a more scalable route to football's premier competition. Few doubt that this move will be a major boost for the development of football in Australia. But it will also have major implications for Australia's commercial, cultural, and political engagement with Asia.

It was in an effort to understand these broader implications that the Lowy Institute for International Policy held a half-day seminar on the subject, bringing together a diverse range of participants, from footballers and foreign policy specialists to sports administrators and economists.¹ This Policy Brief is an effort to distil and develop some of the key themes that emerged from the seminar. In particular, the aim is to identify the opportunities AFC membership will create for Australia's engagement with Asia and to suggest strategies by which government, business, and other sectors of the community might leverage these opportunities. In this respect, the focus of this paper is less on football than the relationship between sport and international policy.

Australia joins Asia

At a time when Australia remains, anachronistically, a member of the West Europe and Others Group (WEOG) in the United Nations, it has become an Asian member of FIFA, football's international

governing body (and an organisation with more members than the UN). The AFC is one of world football's six confederations, each of which is responsible for the development of football and the staging of competitions at club and national level within their continental grouping.² While the Asian Confederation's geographic scope extends from the Middle East to North and Southeast Asia, it is likely that Australia will be a member of either the AFC's East Asia or ASEAN regional groupings.³

AFC membership means that, for the first time in its history, Australia will have a significant, on-going sporting relationship with a large number of Asian (and Middle Eastern) countries. Australians have competed with Asian counterparts in a variety of sports in the past, but these have tended to be limited to particular countries – most notably cricketing ties with the subcontinent – or have been occasional sporting encounters. By contrast, Australian national and club teams will now play regular competitive matches against teams from throughout the region.

From 2006 there will be an Australian national or club side engaged in competitive football matches against Asian teams every year. Between 2006 and 2009 the Australian national side will play at least 18 full competition home and away matches against other Asian sides in qualifiers for the Asian Cup and the World Cup – more, should Australia qualify for the Asian Cup in 2007.⁴ At a club level, two Australia A-League teams will compete each year in the Asian Champions League competition, involving at least six home and away matches – again, more if they progress past the group stage.⁵ Australian women's and youth sides will also compete regularly against their Asian counterparts.

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While football is widely popular in Asia, the sport is yet to reach its full potential in the region. It continues to face strong competition from other globalising sports, most notably basketball. The popularity of European teams and footballers – especially those of the English Premier League – amongst Asians has generally been greater than that of local teams and players. (Indeed, in 2004 Thailand’s Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra launched an abortive effort to purchase the Liverpool Football Club on behalf of the Thai state). And Asia has failed to match the success of most other continents in international football competitions.

Nonetheless, football in Asia – North Asia in particular – has made significant advances in recent years. The 2002 World Cup, co-hosted by Korea and Japan, dramatically increased the sport’s exposure in the region and was notable for the success of the two host nation teams.⁶ Chinese, Japanese, and Korean players are now playing in top-flight European club teams. And in 2002 the AFC launched *Vision Asia*, a comprehensive blueprint for the development of all aspects of the game, from administration and marketing to the improvement of playing standards.⁷ The rise of football also reflects the increased time many Asians now devote to sport and leisure activity as a result of increased affluence and even perhaps, to changing attitudes to the role of sport in Asian cultures and the acceptability of sport as a career.⁸

Trading on football

Australia’s new sporting relationship with Asia will, most obviously, create new commercial opportunities for Australian business. Estimating the economic benefits of sporting events and competitions is notoriously difficult – and often prone to exaggeration. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify three new dimensions that football will add to Australia’s already well-developed economic ties with Asia:

Sponsorship and media rights: Sponsors of Australian football teams, at both national and club levels, will now reach a massive new audience, with the AFC encompassing some two-thirds of the world’s population. Australia will also hold television rights for its games in Asian Cup qualifiers and the preliminary rounds of World Cup qualification. The 2004 Asian Cup final between host country China and Japan provides some sense of the marketing and media rights potential of the sport in Asia. In China alone, the final drew an estimated television audience of some 300 million, the highest-rating sporting event on Chinese television ever. (The record had been held by the 2002 World Cup match between China and Brazil).⁹

That potential is further underlined by the proliferation of cable or satellite television in Asia, typically a key vehicle for football and sports broadcasting. By 2002 the number of cable television subscribers in China had reached 75 per 1,000 people (not including Hong Kong where subscription rates were 125 per 1,000 in 2003).¹⁰ The Chinese figure is remarkable considering the country’s population and income disparities. And while subscription rates

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are much higher in Europe and the US, the Chinese figure compares very favourably with Australia where there were 76 subscribers per 1,000 in 2002. The penetration of pay TV in Japan and Korea is significantly higher than China, with 193 per 1,000 and 282 per 1,000 respectively.

Another factor in the sponsorship and marketing potential of football in Asia is the prospect of greater player movement between national leagues in the region. Currently there are a small number of Asian players in the A-League, while Australian players are playing in Asian leagues, most notably in Malaysia and Singapore (though in the past Australians have also played in South Korea, China and Japan). Efforts to encourage additional Asian players into the A-League would generate greater regional interest in the competition here, draw new sponsors and provide existing sponsors with a greater audience. A similar effect is likely to be produced by greater numbers of Australians playing in Asian leagues.¹¹

Travel and tourism: Sport is an increasingly significant driver of tourism, reflected most obviously in the South African, New Zealand and English fans who travel to Australia to watch rugby union and cricketing tours. The Australian Rugby Union estimated that the 2003 Rugby World Cup generated some 40,000 international visitors to Australia, many of whom stayed on beyond the tournament.¹² As an AFC member Australia will now have an opportunity to host a future Asian Cup final tournament (comparable in scale to the Rugby Union World Cup), in addition to one-off games such as World Cup qualifiers and finals of the Asian Champions League.

That said, while anecdotal evidence suggests that some Asian fans do travel internationally to watch their teams play in AFC competitions, the numbers are small at present. Indeed, there are a number of obstacles to football's ability to generate travel and tourism revenues in Asia (and for Australia). The relatively high cost of travel and distance are clearly factors, as is the relative infancy – at least in their current incarnations – of competitions such as the Asian Champions League and the Asian Cup. Other factors include restrictive visa requirements in some countries and airline routes and schedules. Indeed Australia's relatively tough visa requirements have already been an issue in past efforts to bring Middle Eastern teams to Australia.

Nevertheless, the fact that sports tourism is so underdeveloped in the AFC makes it an opportunity for Australian companies, some of which have significant experience and expertise in this type of travel. As levels of affluence in Asia increase so too does the ability and willingness to travel. Between 1998 and 2003 the number of Chinese travelling abroad for tourism increased by an average 31 per cent annually. (In 2003 some 20 million Chinese travelled abroad on holidays).¹³ Some of the obstacles noted above can be overcome by adjustments to visa regulations, the growth of low-cost airlines in Asia, and gradual improvements in the speed and efficiency of air travel.

Business networking: According to the Australian Trade Commission, Austrade, up to 50 per cent of new Australian exporters are 'accidental' – that is, they become exporters as a result of a chance meeting with an international customer or distributor.¹⁴ Sporting events provide excellent opportunities for the establishment of such linkages. By way

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of example, Austrade estimates that its ‘Business Club Australia’ business networking programs at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and 2003 Rugby Union World Cup generated some A\$1.2 billion and A\$370 million in business deals respectively.¹⁵

The Business Club Australia model is applicable to a number of AFC competitions, linked either to individual, high-profile games, such as World Cup qualifiers, or tournaments such as the Asian Cup. Indeed, given the home and away nature of these games it would also offer opportunities to take the program into Asia. The value of such football networking opportunities is further underlined by the fact that in many cases, especially in the Middle East, the head of the local football federation is a member of the ruling family or part of the government/business elite.¹⁶ Often it would be difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to such people, either for businesspeople or even Australia’s diplomatic representatives.

Further networking opportunities may arise in the context of ‘tri-nations’ type competitions between Australia and other Asian national teams. An annual or biennial series between Australia, Japan and South Korea would be beneficial from a sporting perspective, given that the latter two countries are amongst the strongest football powers in the AFC. But it would also provide opportunities for business networking with two of Australia’s most important markets – outside China – in the region. A similar sporting series with the UAE and Saudi Arabia would add new dimensions to Australia’s rapidly developing commercial relationship with these countries (Australia is in the process of negotiating an FTA with the UAE and already has significant sporting links with that country through the Melbourne Cup).

‘Football values’

If new business opportunities are the most evident potential products of this looming sporting relationship, football’s impact on popular engagement between Australian and Asian societies could, over the longer term, be more transformational. Australia’s engagement with Asia is already a reality across many fields, from politics and commerce, to tourism and education. Typically these linkages are driven by political and business elites.¹⁷ Or, to the extent that they occur at a popular level, they are largely either transactional or charitable. In the first instance, something is being pursued: an exotic holiday, a ‘Western’ education, a market for a good or service. In the second, some shortcoming is being addressed, most commonly through the provision of development assistance. Both instances underline, however, the difference between societies – that is, one lacks what the other has – rather than their commonalities.¹⁸

Sport, by contrast, provides a common point of conversation between societies. Sport fans undoubtedly follow their teams passionately, but they also tend to share an appreciation for the game and its players that often crosses national and cultural boundaries, illustrated by the immense popularity of Australian cricketers Adam Gilchrist and Steve Waugh in India. Whether in football stadiums in Asia or Australia, or via media coverage of the sport, football will provide a much broader and more grass-roots engagement which has largely been absent in the past. Given the centrality of sport in the Australian psyche, the development of a sporting relationship with regional neighbours as enthusiastic about their sport as Australians could transform local perceptions – and preconceptions –

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of what individual Asian societies are really like. For example, one prominent Australian footballer has noted how playing in China changed his perceptions of the Chinese people and society.¹⁹

Football may also provide a way to by-pass the tortuous debate over whether Australia is an Asian nation. Identity reflects different elements, from geography and culture to ethnicity. By some of these measures Australia is ‘Asian’ and by others it clearly isn’t. Football will add another meaningful strand – at both popular and institutional levels – to a web of ties placing Australia in the region. Where some Asian leaders have used the notion of ‘Asian values’ as a cipher for divergent political interests and outlooks, ‘football values’ could well become a bridge.²⁰ In this respect it is worth noting that Australia is not just joining the Asian football club. Should Australia qualify for future World Cups, it will become an Asian representative in international sport’s biggest event, at a time when Asia is trying to assert itself as a footballing power.

At the same time, it should be recognised that membership of the AFC will not make Australia any more Asian than the Persian Gulf countries that are also members of the Confederation. Nor will football help Australia overcome all of the prejudices, misconceptions and historical legacies – both Australian and Asian – that still complicate its ties with the region. Indeed football may reinforce stereotypes, given the role sporting rivalries often play as manifestation of national animosities. As George Orwell once wrote of international sport, ‘there cannot be much doubt that the whole thing is bound up with the rise of nationalism – that is, with the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige’.²¹

One can also question whether the deepening and broadening of Australia’s engagement with Asia actually matters. The Howard Government has argued on a number of occasions that what really counts is less the building of deeper cultural or popular ties than the creation of practical relations between Australia and individual Asian states based on shared interests. The government’s argument is reasonable when one considers that it has, among other things, successfully negotiated bilateral FTAs with Singapore and Thailand, has built effective counter-terrorism cooperation with Indonesia and guided the burgeoning economic relationship with China, all at a time when its image in the region has purportedly been poor.

Nonetheless, there are also practical grounds for why a broader engagement with Asia has become more important in foreign policy terms. One key reason is that Asia is more democratic than it once was. In many cases, parliaments and public opinion are playing an enhanced role in foreign policy, illustrated by the care with which the Indonesian government has had to tread domestically on counter-terrorism measures. As a result, Australian governments can no longer rely solely on their influence with political elites. The same applies in Australia. One of the reasons the Howard Government distanced itself from the Hawke/Keating Governments’ regional policies was because it sensed broader public discomfort with Australia’s perceived rush to become an Asian nation.

Moreover, globalisation has dramatically increased the importance of national ‘branding’. Perceptions of other nations can affect everything from their ability to attract investment and sell their services internationally – influencing, for example, the

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preparedness of parents to send their children to Australia for their university education – to the ability of nations to conduct successful public diplomacy programs on international issues such as terrorism, disease and the environment.

None of this is to suggest that the importance of public profile in the region has been lost on the Australian government. It was implicit in the generous one billion dollar aid package provided to Indonesia in the wake of the 2004 tsunami and on a smaller scale, in cultural exchange programs with a range of Asian countries. What football provides is another, and in many respects unique opportunity, to deepen popular engagement and understanding between the Australian and Asian societies – albeit one that requires action by and better coordination between government, cultural, and sporting bodies. Two opportunities/ strategies stand out in particular:

Integrating football into cultural diplomacy:

Australia has bilateral cultural relations programs with a number of Asian countries and a newly established program with the Arab world (through the Council for Australian–Arab relations). Most operate through government-funded bilateral institutes. Some are well established, like the Australia–Indonesia Institute founded in 1989, while others are of more recent vintage, such as the Australia–Thailand Institute, set up in 2005. Australia has similar institutes with China, India, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia. The key role for these institutes is to work with Australian business and the broader community to ‘promote people-to-people linkages and positive and contemporary images of Australia’.²² As such they represent an important vehicle by which Australia seeks to establish its ‘brand’ in Asia.

Programs vary from country to country, with activities ranging from Muslim exchanges (Indonesia), educational programs (Japan), and the distribution of information kits (South Korea). Despite the fact that sport plays a central role in Australian society, it has hitherto been relatively under-represented in cultural diplomacy in Asia (for understandable reasons given the lack of common sports played). There are prominent exceptions, most notably in the case of the Australia–India Council, which funds, among other sporting activities, the Border–Gavaskar scholarship for young Indian cricketers. But given Australia’s AFC membership and the popularity of football across Asia (and within Australia where football is now the number one team sport in terms of youth participation) there is now a greater opportunity to integrate sport into these programs.

This could be achieved in two ways: using football as the focus of cultural relations programs, through the support of either bilateral or tri-nations tournaments or football development programs (see below); or building cultural relations events, such as concerts and educational programs, around high profile football matches.²³ Sport offers the opportunity to reach a much broader audience and younger demographic than typical cultural events. It also offers the opportunity to engage the Australian diaspora living and working in Asia as well as Asian communities in Australia, both of which play important roles in influencing how their home countries perceive the other.

A key factor in the success of this type of activity would be the establishment of mechanisms for coordination and information sharing between government, bilateral institutes, the FFA and

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individual teams. Currently, such coordination seems largely informal and *ad hoc* – understandable given the infancy of Australia’s footballing venture into Asia. But if the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or bilateral institutes are to build football into their long-range programs some mechanism will be needed to provide, at the very least, advance schedules of games.

Football and development: The ways in which football might be used in the promotion of people-to-people links and cultural relations will vary between countries in Asia. Skill levels are uneven across the AFC. There would be little point, for example, in building cultural diplomacy around uneven football contests (even though such contests will probably occur during official AFC competitions). In some cases, therefore, Australia’s football ties with particular countries would be more appropriately used as a vehicle for, or could be supported by, sports development programs. This would underline that membership of the AFC was not simply a means of securing an easier path to the World Cup, but that Australia is fully committed to the goal of developing the sport in the region.

Australia already undertakes a highly successful sports development program with South Pacific countries which might provide a model for some Asian countries. In particular, a small part of Australia’s extensive assistance program to Indonesia might be used for the development of Indonesian football, leveraging Australia’s considerable expertise in the field. There has always been public frustration in Indonesia about the national team’s lack of success in regional and international competitions and a small but visible program of sports development assistance would have tangible

benefits both for Indonesia and Australia. A plan for just this kind of assistance was developed by the Australia–Indonesia Institute in the mid 1990s, at the request of the Indonesian government, but was never acted upon.

An Australian football development assistance effort could vary in scale. Small contributions of equipment, coaching clinics and exchange programs could be managed through the existing bilateral institutes. More significant efforts could also be undertaken through the existing comprehensive development program being conducted by the AFC (‘Vision Asia’). Working through the AFC’s existing development framework would help avoid fragmented and *ad hoc* contributions that achieve little with respect to either the development of sport in the target country or Australia’s efforts to achieve its cultural relations goals. But whether such activities are small or large scale, coordination between Australian government agencies, bilateral institutes, the FFA, the AFC, and national associations in Asia would again be a key component of any successful effort.

Football and foreign policy

Australia’s membership of the AFC also offers an opportunity for a more direct use of football as an instrument of foreign policy. The use of sport in such a manner has a long history, from Germany’s spectacularly unsuccessful effort to use the 1936 Berlin Olympics to demonstrate their racial superiority, to the Nixon Administration’s use of ping-pong diplomacy to break the diplomatic ice with China.

More recently in Asia we have seen efforts, to varying degrees of success, to use football as a way to improve bilateral relations. Korea and Japan’s

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joint hosting of the 2002 World Cup did not sweep away the historical acrimony in their bilateral relationship. But the fact that officials from both countries were able to cooperate to produce a successful tournament was significant. Similarly, at the 2003 ASEAN+3 Summit, China, Japan, and South Korea undertook to expand people-to-people links between their countries, including through football and table tennis matches.²⁴ And China's hosting of the Beijing Olympics is undoubtedly a key component of its efforts to demonstrate its arrival as a major power on the world stage.

That said, while sport can be a useful diplomatic ice-breaker, add diversity to a relationship, or as outlined above, develop its popular dimensions, it cannot be a substitute for political, economic, or strategic substance. (In the same way, football does not make countries go to war, as is sometimes claimed, if there aren't existing underlying tensions). For all the cricket that has been played between Australia and India over the years the bilateral relationship has been relatively under-developed. Real activity has only been generated recently, largely as a result of the spectacular growth of the Indian economy.

Nonetheless, within these limits, there is an opportunity for a more sophisticated use by Australia of its future sporting relationship with Asia as an instrument of foreign policy. Australia does not need to use sport to break the ice with many countries in the region given that its bilateral relationships in Asia are already well-developed. Nor is football likely to be used in any effort to overcome national animosities; for the most part, aside from occasional turbulence, Australia does not have deep historical enmities with any

nation in the region. Two opportunities more relevant to Australian circumstances do, however, present themselves:

Stadiums as diplomatic forums: As already noted above, the senior levels of a number of Asian football federations are drawn from political and business elites. Football matches would provide access and networking opportunities for Australian diplomatic representatives that might not otherwise exist. Similarly, high profile football matches provide opportunities for interaction between Australian and Asian political leaders, without the need to produce the substantive agendas and programs that are usually required to justify bilateral visits. Taking visiting Asian dignitaries to football matches in Australia, rather than more iconic but less well-understood sports such as Australian Rules, also has the benefit of emphasising the commonalities between Australia and Asia rather than the differences.

Football and public diplomacy: Today, solutions to many of the most serious problems faced by the international community are as reliant on actions by individuals within states – for example, the practice of safe sex to prevent the global spread of HIV/AIDS – as they are on actions by national governments and elites. But if globalisation provides the foreign policy maker with enhanced means to address a broader audience, it does not necessarily mean that people at the other end will listen especially if they do not trust the source. What is often required, therefore, is an appropriate vehicle to deliver that message.

One example of how Australia might use football in Asia to achieve key foreign policy objectives is in the fight against HIV/AIDS – an objective the

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Australian government shares with many of its counterparts in the region. Through its Global HIV/AIDS initiative, Australia has committed a total A\$600 million from 2000 to 2010 to the fight this disease. The government is also keen to take creative approaches to this issue, including by engaging Australian businesses in this campaign. (A recent forum was held at the Lowy Institute examining how Australian businesses that work in Asia might assist the Government's HIV/AIDS awareness campaign).

Australia's membership of the AFC provides a unique opportunity for the government and perhaps business to pursue this objective. Football and footballers can play an important role in normalising discussion of a disease that it still very sensitive in many societies. Coming from footballers, rather than officials or doctors, the HIV/AIDS awareness message is both more palatable and less patronising. Indeed using sport to promote HIV/AIDS awareness is not new. Rugby league has been very successful at promoting HIV/AIDS awareness in Papua New Guinea. And FIFA joined with the WHO in 2004 to launch an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign focusing on Africa in particular.

Sponsorship is one specific strategy that has been used effectively in Australia, the most famous being the *Quit* anti-smoking campaign that sponsored a number of sporting teams. In the case of football, government, or even a government/business partnership might choose to sponsor an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign associated with the national team when it plays in the Asian Cup or World Cup qualifiers. Alternately it could sponsor whichever A-League teams qualify to play in the Asian Champions League. Over the longer term, as

Australian players build a profile in Asia, personal appearances promoting HIV/AIDS awareness could also be a useful strategy, in the same way that Rugby League player Mal Meninga has been a very effective Ambassador for HIV/AIDS awareness in Papua New Guinea.

Policy recommendations

While it is this paper's view that Australia's new sporting relationship will be transformational over the long-term, there is clearly a need not to place too heavy a burden on Australian football's initial foray into Asia. As already noted, playing football in Asia is unlikely to eliminate every critical impulse in the region toward Australia and *vice versa*. AFC membership has itself been the product of careful diplomacy by the FFA after repeated attempts in the past failed to achieve this objective. As the confederation's newest member Australia will have to tread cautiously. Likewise, using football to achieve broader commercial, political, and cultural objectives in Asia will be a long-term venture.

Nonetheless, it is clear that football will create new opportunities for Australia in the region. Leveraging these opportunities will require creativity, coordination, and effective communication between the various stakeholders. With this in mind, this paper suggests five key policy recommendations aimed at Australian government, business, and the FFA:

- The FFA, government and other stakeholders should establish a 'Football Asia Council', supported by a dedicated website, to ensure coordination of

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commercial, cultural, and public diplomacy programs with Australian participation in Asian football competitions. Members of the Council should include DFAT, the FFA, business representatives, Austrade, and bilateral institutes.

- The FFA, business and government should undertake, perhaps through a ‘Football Asia Council’, a coordinated effort to develop football-based tourism and travel. This is an opportunity for Australian travel companies with expertise in the field, but it would also require the government and the FFA to identify key obstacles to sports-based tourism – including processes for the issuing of Australian visas for certain countries in Asia.
- Following on from its previous successful ‘Business Club Australia’ programs, Austrade should launch a ‘Football Business Club Australia’ to leverage commercial opportunities arising from Australian participation in forthcoming AFC competition games, including away games in Asia. Such a program is obviously better built around major games or tournaments. In this regard, business, but also cultural and political networking opportunities would be enhanced by the initiation by the FFA of a tri-nations type tournament with Japan and South Korea or perhaps Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These countries offer the strongest footballing competition in the region, but are also Australia’s major economic and political partners in Asia and the Middle East respectively. The FFA, with support from the government, should also bid, at an appropriate time, to host the Asian Cup.
- The FFA should create a small scale football development package that could be provided to, and funded by, bilateral institutes as a part of cultural relations programs. A larger-scale sports development effort focusing on Indonesia and consistent with the AFC’s ‘Vision Asia’ program should be undertaken by the Australian government, and funded either through AUSAID or the Australia–Indonesia Institute.
- The Australian government and business should provide sponsorship linked to HIV/AIDS awareness prevention to whichever A-League sides qualify for the annual Asian Champions League. The government should also engage with the AFC and FIFA as a part of its regional HIV/AIDS campaign.

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Notes

- ¹ *Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport*, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.
- ² The six confederations are the AFC in Asia, CAF in Africa, CONCACAF in North and Central America and the Caribbean, CONMEBOL in South America, UEFA in Europe and the OFC in Oceania.
- ³ The membership of each regional group is as follows: **West Asia** – Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen; **Central & South Asia** – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan; **East Asia** – China PR, Chinese Taipei, DPR Korea, Guam, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea Republic, Macau, Mongolia; **Asean** – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives Republic, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam.
- ⁴ Sixteen national teams compete in the Asian Cup, held every four years in non-World Cup years. The defending champion and host nation gain automatic entry to the tournament. Other national teams compete in qualifying rounds for the remaining 14 places.
- ⁵ The Asian Champions League is Asia's equivalent of the European Champions League. It involves competition between the national club champions from 'mature' national leagues in the AFC. Teams come from China, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Thailand, UAE, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Australia from 2007. Teams play three home and away group-phase games followed by a knockout competition involving the top teams in each group.
- ⁶ Co-host's Japan and South Korea made it to the quarter finals and semi-finals respectively.
- ⁷ Asian Football Confederation, *Vision Asia*. 2002: <http://www.the-afc.com/english/visionasia/default.asp?mnsection=visionasia§ion=main>.
- ⁸ Seamus O'Brien, President, World Sport Group, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.
- ⁹ *Asian Cup final TV ratings break China record*. People's Daily Online 2004: http://english.people.com.cn/200408/11/eng20040811_152612.html.
- ¹⁰ World Bank, *World Development Indicators Online*. 2005: <https://publications.worldbank.org/subscriptions/WDI/>.
- ¹¹ Certainly, the commercial potential of signing Asian players has not been lost on European clubs. The signing in 2005 of the Korean player Park Ji-sung by English Premier Club, Manchester United, probably had as much to do with selling the Club's brand in Asia as Park's undoubted football prowess.
- ¹² Tim Harcourt, Chief Economist, Austrade, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.
- ¹³ World Bank, *World Development Indicators Online*.
- ¹⁴ Tim Harcourt, Chief Economist, Austrade, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.

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- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ For example, the Presidents of the Saudi, Bahraini, Qatari, Omani, and Malaysian Football Associations are all members of the ruling family. The President of the South Korean Association is also Chairman of Hyundai Heavy Industries and an elected member of the National Assembly.
- ¹⁷ John Bowan, Litmus Consulting, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.
- ¹⁸ Anthony Bubalo, Comrades on and off the pitch. *Australian*, 30 September 2005, p 14.
- ¹⁹ Mark Rudan, Captain, Sydney FC, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October 2005.
- ²⁰ Bubalo, Comrades on and off the pitch.
- ²¹ George Orwell, *The Sporting Spirit*. George Orwell's Library 1945: http://orwell.ru/library/articles/spirit/english/e_spirit.
- ²² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Annual Report 2004-2005*. Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, 2005, p 193.
- ²³ Allan Taylor, Chairman, Australia-Indonesia Institute, speaking at Football Diplomacy: Engaging Asia through Sport, held at the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, 19 October, 2005.
- ²⁴ *Joint Declaration on the Promotion of Tripartite Cooperation among the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea*. October 7, 2003: www.aseansec.org/15284.htm.

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