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The Dragon or The Eagle:
The Choice Between China and The United States Among the Asia Pacific
Countries

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**THE DRAGON OR THE EAGLE:
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THE ASIA PACIFIC COUNTRIES**

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The shift of the US policy from engaging China to containing China can be traced back to the Obama administration and his pivot to Asia strategy in 2009. It coincided with the Chinese economy surpassing 10% of global output in real terms, and becoming the second largest

one superpower without the other, a tacit competition emerges. Figure 1 below shows the members of the three groupings. Most of the countries in the Asia Pacific region are in all or two of the groupings. It is not surprising that countries may prefer to be non-aligned as China and the US are significant trading partners as described earlier.

Forced to make a choice

education or technology. The top left quadrant is where the bystander is *dependent* on the superpower that dominates the trade relationship. There is little negotiating power for the bystander and there is little option but to look for opportunities to please the partner like closer political relationships or supporting trade blocs that is spearheaded by the power. In the bottom

Japan, on the hand, need both China and

Non Aligned Movement 2.0

Countries in Asia-Pacific should not have to choose between China and the US. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien-Loo said that if Washington tries to contain China, they will begin a course of confrontation that will last decades and put the long-heralded Asian century in jeopardy. But the reality is that these bystander countries may not have a choice in the matter due to the worsening ties between the two superpowers (Weiss, 2022; EIU Update, 23rd October, 2020). The Asia-Pacific countries are right in the middle of the crossfire between China and the US. The US tries to lure the bystander countries by guaranteeing military assistance if their sovereignty is compromised, while China offers tangible economic sweeteners like infrastructure investments and a growing market for exports. Both types of assistance are attractive and necessary, particularly for developing economies. Economic growth depends on political stability and security, and vice-versa. For either superpower, offering both economic and international security assistance can tilt the balance. On the other hand, creating an alliance among bystander countries to preserve their neutrality seems to be a necessity. Perhaps it is time for a Non Aligned Movement (NAM) type of organization in the Asia Pacific.

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