# U.S. State Department's 'The Firm' Aids Nations Facing Chinese Economic Coercion; East Asia Summit Discusses Economic Cooperation and Geopolitical Tensions



**U.S.-China Economic Tensions and Summit's New Beginnings**

### U.S. State Department's "The Firm" Assists Economically Coerced Countries

The U.S. State Department has formed an eight-person team known as "the firm" to support countries facing economic coercion from China. This team emerged two years ago to assist Lithuania during a dispute with China over Taiwan. U.S. diplomats, led by senior adviser Melanie Hart, aim to help these nations navigate trade disruptions caused by Beijing. The team’s efforts include seeking new markets for goods, providing financial credits, and coordinating assistance. The Chinese Embassy in Washington denies using economic pressure, attributing the trade issues to the affected countries' actions against Chinese interests.

### Trilateral Summit Between China, Japan, and South Korea

On May 27, 2024, leaders from South Korea, Japan, and China convened in Seoul for their first trilateral meeting in four and a half years. Presidents Yoon Suk Yeol of South Korea, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan, and Premier Li Qiang of China focused on economic cooperation, supply chain security, and avoiding sensitive geopolitical issues. North Korea's planned satellite launch and increased arms trade with Russia also surfaced during the talks. The leaders committed to annual meetings, revived free trade agreement discussions, and enhanced cooperation on various non-security issues, promoting a multipolar world order. However, tensions due to U.S.-led export controls and alliances with Seoul and Tokyo cast a shadow over the summit.

These developments show ongoing efforts to manage economic dependencies and geopolitical frictions in East Asia.