

Opening Statement of Ambassador Walter F. Mondale
State Department News Conference
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August 13, 1993

Earlier this morning, I took the oath of office as the United States Ambassador to Japan. Next month, I will arrive in Tokyo to assume my duties at the Embassy. Both Joan and I are enthusiastic about this opportunity to live and work in Japan, and we look forward to making many new friends there.

I am honored that I can serve President Clinton and the American people in this most important diplomatic role. The President has said that "there is no more important bilateral relationship in the world than that which exists between the United States and Japan." We are strategic allies and essential political partners, and our economic destinies are now inseparable.

While the overall state of our relationship is solid, there are of course some tensions between us. In particular, I believe our most pressing need at this time is to correct the imbalance in our economic relationship. This is important in its own right. It is also important because constant trade friction weakens public support in both the United States and Japan for our alliance and it threatens our ability to cooperate on a broader agenda.

Fortunately, we in the United States are now beginning to take the difficult and long-needed steps to solve our own economic problems. President Clinton has already shown that he is determined to reduce the deficit and revitalize the American economy. With his leadership, I believe we may be at a real historic turning point in the political and economic life of the nation, as we begin to put our own domestic house in order.

In turn, we look to Japan to address its own economic agenda with equal vigor, including help with promoting global economic growth and removing both formal and informal barriers to the flow of goods, services and investment. On these issues, I believe we saw some important and positive commitments come out of last month's G-7 summit and the bilateral economic framework that was agreed

upon. I hope that we can build even further on the success of these efforts.

I believe these developments reflect an emerging new international reality, in which many traditional priorities are being reconsidered and institutional arrangements reshaped. Just as many other nations are changing with the end of the Cold War, so too are the United States and Japan. During the past nine months, the voters in both our nations have elected new governments. In America we have a new administration that was elected on the promise of change; while in Japan a new coalition government was formed in the past week with its own themes of change.

I am confident and optimistic that our two governments will be able to cooperate and work together.

In this spirit, as Ambassador, I will try to both advance the interests of the United States in our relationship with Japan and encourage cooperation on a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues. I also will try to promote greater mutual understanding between the people and governments of our two countries. Precisely because our two nations share so many interests and values in common, we cannot afford to let misunderstanding and miscommunication push us apart.

My hope is that, in the years ahead, our relationship with Japan can move toward the shared benefits and responsibilities which befit our two great nations and our leadership in the world. If the United States and Japan can work together — as I know we can — then practically every problem in the world will get better or, at least, will be easier to handle. If our relationship deteriorates, then every one of these problems will get worse or become that much harder, even impossible, to solve.

I will do my best to help ensure that our special partnership with Japan continues to thrive. I am grateful to the President, the Congress and the American people for the support they have already shown me as I begin to carry out my responsibilities as Ambassador.

Both Joan and I look forward to our new life in Japan.



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