



Written by [Dennis Behrendt](#) on August 26, 2010

Americans are “Simple-Minded” Says Japanese Politician Ichiro Ozawa

But it seems that it is the American people whom he really dislikes. In a speech to fellow lawmakers on August 25, the political heavyweight who has announced his intention to challenge current Prime Minister Naoto Kan compared Americans to single-celled organisms.

"Why is the United States so simple? I like Americans, but they are somewhat monocellular," [he said](#). "When I talk with Americans, I often wonder why they are so simple-minded."

But, as with the Brits, he says he likes American democracy: "I don't think Americans are very smart, but I give extremely high credit for democracy and choices by its people," he said, lauding the election of Barack Obama. As to that, he said, "A black president was born in the United States where having a black president seemed impossible."



Ozawa's statements could be chalked up as a populist attempt to inspire Japanese nationalism as he moves to generate support for his effort to unseat the current prime minister. That would be in keeping with his other foreign policy statements about U.S. activity in Japan.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in February 2009 [Ozawa told reporters](#) following a meeting with Secretary of State Clinton: "Both sides [Japan and the U.S.] must be on an equal footing and one should not be subordinated to the other."

Also in 2009, he elaborated further on that theme:

I think putting (Japan-based) troops on the front line does not have much significance in times like these, and the 7th Fleet would be enough for the U.S. presence in the Far East from a strategic viewpoint...The Americans' role should become smaller if Japan has a decent strategy for dealing with global issues and shares greater burdens at least on matters associated with our country.

While Ozawa's comments about both British and American citizens are unlikely to win him many friends abroad, his strategy may not be paying off at home, either. Facing a scandal over the purchase of land in Tokyo that led an inquest panel to [conclude](#) that he is likely "an accomplice" that "should therefore stand trial," many Japanese citizens are unhappy that he has announced an attempt to shake up the government, [according to the Daily Yomiuri Online](#).

"If the government were a company, it would be like frequently changing president and management



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policy," Kimihiko Takemori, a concerned Japanese citizen told the *Daily Yomiuri*. "Japan appears to be a country with no substantial leader. We'll lose the confidence of other countries."

Koitsu Sasaki, a grad student at the University of Tokyo, also criticized Ozawa's behavior. "I can't believe it," Sasaki, said. "He's yet to explain his responsibility for the money-and-politics scandal."

Meanwhile, business owner Masahiro Oguri criticized the impact of Ozawa's decision on the Japanese economy. "Our products have become far less competitive recently due to the strong yen. Why [has Ozawa decided to run] at this difficult time?" Oguri wondered. "The economy hasn't improved at all."

"Japan's political system has ground to a halt," Oguri added with a grimace, according to the *Daily Yomiuri*.



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