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## Japan's Keidanren and Political Influence on Market Liberalization

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# JAPAN'S KEIDANREN AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON MARKET LIBERALIZATION

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Hidetaka Yoshimatsu

Ever since Japan's emergence as an economic power, governmental officials, scholars, and business leaders have debated whether or not the Japanese market has been sufficiently opened. A major issue in this regard is the problem of determining the extent to which the market is open.<sup>1</sup> Another critical issue is the identification of forces working to liberalize the Japanese market. Changes in commercial policies are explained sometimes in terms of foreign pressure (*gaiatsu*). For instance, Calder refers to Japan as a "reactive state" where "the impetus to policy change is typically supplied by outside pressure."<sup>2</sup> This interpretation regards Japan as unlikely to formulate independent external economic policies without foreign pressure; indeed, quite a few market opening measures have been adopted as a consequence of pressure from foreign governments, especially the United States. But foreign pressure alone hardly seems sufficient to explain the overall trend toward market opening. As several studies argue, the amount of pressure applied to the Japanese government and the degree of openness at-

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1. See, for instance, Bela Balassa, "Japan's Trade Policies," *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv* 122 (1986); Paul Krugman, ed., *Trade with Japan: Has the Door Opened Wider?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Robert Z. Lawrence, "Efficient or Exclusionist? The Import Behavior of Japanese Corporate Groups," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 1 (1991); and C. Fred Bergsten and Noland Marcus, *Reconcilable Differences? United States-Japan Economic Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1993).

2. Kent E. Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the Reactive State," *World Politics* 40:4 (1988), p. 518.

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