

Identity, Populism and the Romantic Impulse Japan and the Politics of Nostalgia

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Arrival of the Emperor at Tokyo after the Victory (1895), Source; Met Museum

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Anti-globalization and the emergence of populist/authoritarian politics in Europe and North America suggests that the pillars of the post-1945 era are crumbling. In Japan and South Korea, political tensions are frequently shaped by divisions over competing narratives of national identity. Understanding the appeal of these narratives and the romantic impulse that drives some leaders to embrace contentious historical arguments at home, while practicing rational, pragmatic politics abroad, highlights the danger of assuming that countries such as Japan will remain immune to the populist contagion.

John Nilsson-Wright is Senior Lecturer in Modern Japanese Politics and International Relations in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge. His work concentrates on the Cold War relationship between the United States and Northeast Asia, with particular reference to the security and political relationships between the United States and Japan and the two Koreas, but has expanded to include contemporary regional security issues and political change.

Hamit Bozarslan is Professor at EHESS. His research interests focus on the history of modern and contemporary Turkey, the Kurdish issue, the question of minorities in the Middle-East, and the history and sociology of violence in the Middle-East.

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