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.

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