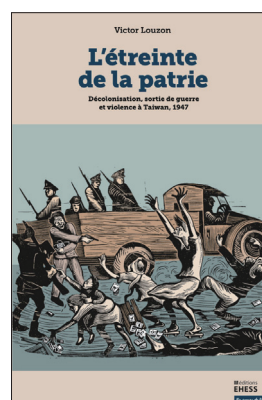


Each constitution was created with unique historical backgrounds and specific political objectives. The 1954 Constitution may have sowed discord, jealousy, uncertainty, and fear (p. 135), ultimately aiming to weaken the organisational basis for broader action against the CCP (p. 147). The author may be on firmer ground in suggesting that Stalin had less influence on the 1954 Constitution-making process (p. 9). However, when viewed as part of the larger continuum of constitution-making under the CCP and in China, these points about motivation and drivers of the 1954 Constitution fade into historical oblivion. The 1982 Constitution, building upon its predecessors, holds more legitimacy and serves as an aspirational constitution in the larger historical context.

Despite the harsh criticisms of the 1954 Constitution and constitutions under the CCP, the book also presents a perspective of constitutional progression. It highlights how important issues that were inadequately addressed, omissions, and ambiguities that were subject to criticism and ridicule, attracted wide popular critiques and received firmer answers decades later. The continuity of the constitutional order under the CCP is a significant point made by Diamant, with later constitutions offering much-needed corrective measures to previously unaddressed matters. For example, the Three Represents (*sange daibiao* 三個代表) were inserted into the 1982 Constitution in 2004 to bring the bourgeoisie into the alliance of political power, while a national anthem was introduced through constitutional amendment, a missing element in previous constitutions that was universally lamented. We may add that incremental protection of peasant rights, promotion of human rights and socialist legality, enhanced control of bureaucrats, and other items on the wish list of the commentators in 1954 were partially realised through subsequent constitutional making.

As a whole, this book provides readers with rich data, offering a rare opportunity to examine popular assessments of the 1954 Constitution that challenge its legitimacy. Despite the title and the repeated claim that the constitution was intended to sow fear and create division, it is valuable reading and reference material.



**LOUZON, Victor. 2023.**  
*L'étreinte de la patrie.*  
*Décolonisation, sortie de*  
*guerre et violence à Taiwan,*  
*1947.*  
 Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.

## I ALEXANDRE GANDIL

is Teaching and Research Fellow (ATER) in Chinese studies at Bordeaux Montaigne University, D2iA, Maison de la Recherche, Domaine Universitaire, Esplanade des Antilles, 33607 Pessac, and Associate Researcher at Sciences Po CERI, Paris, France (alexandre.gandil@sciencespo.fr).

What could be left to say about one of the most important – and discussed – events in Taiwan’s modern history? Victor Louzon masterfully answers this question in *L'étreinte de la patrie. Décolonisation, sortie de guerre et violence à Taiwan, 1947* (The Embrace of the Fatherland: Decolonisation, War Aftermath, and Political Violence in 1947 Taiwan). Stemming from his PhD dissertation, his book provides a reexamination of the so-called 28 February Incident (*er'erba shijian* 二二八事件) – or 228 Incident – based on “an interpretation of the *forms* of violent action that unfolded [during the event]” (p. 30).

Victor Louzon asserts that violence is a relevant object of study for political history as “a form of social action” (p. 31), a behaviour that has meaning for the agent, implies a relationship with others, and unveils a certain past. Applied to the 228 Incident, this approach requires several heuristic shifts from the existing academic literature. In this instance, one of Victor Louzon’s main innovations lies in the new light shed on the violence perpetrated by the tens of thousands of Taiwanese individuals who participated in the uprising. According to the author, these insurgents have too often been considered an “indistinct masse” (p. 29), eclipsed by an allegedly correct yet incomplete interpretation of the event – that is, a struggle for local autonomy led by the Taiwanese elite, and ultimately crushed in bloodshed by the Republic of China (which had taken control of the former Japanese colony in October 1945). Conversely, Louzon points out that the brutal suppression of the uprising by the ruling power has been the subject of more reports and denunciations than genuine analyses.

The aim here is not to put the Taiwanese insurrection and the Chinese repression on an equal footing, but to analyse these two types of violence through the same lens, that is by describing their forms, their conditions of possibility, the meanings invested in them by the protagonists, as well as the emotions thus elicited. The

historical legacy of the 228 Incident is thereby set aside, in contrast to seminal works by Taiwanese, Chinese, and Western scholars – who see it as a more or less distant underlying cause for the White Terror, the Taiwan Independence Movement, or the later democratisation of the Republic of China. Indeed, rather than considering the 228 Incident as an explanatory factor, Victor Louzon assumes that the event itself needs to be properly explained.

Abounding in epistemological meticulousness, Victor Louzon mobilises four historiographical corpuses – concerning the 228 Incident, violence and war in China, the Japanese Empire and colonial Taiwan, and the anthropology of violence – as well as various primary sources, including archives, press articles, and testimonies of survivors collected by Taiwanese historians in the 1990s. The argument unfolds over eight chapters. The first one traces the history of armed revolts in Taiwan during Qing rule and Japanese colonisation – not to identify a distant cause of the 228 Incident, but to establish some diachronic contrast and further elucidate its specificities. Through the prism of “colonial modernity” (p. 67), Chapter Two proposes a sociology of 228 Incident’s actors before analysing the diffusion of the uprising over time and space as well as its inner hierarchies. In Chapter Three, Louzon offers an insightful interpretation of the first days of the event as a “spontaneous remobilisation” (p. 95), demonstrating that the Taiwanese insurgents actually draw from their recent contribution to the Japanese war effort in terms of repertoires of contention and subjectivation. Yet, these reappropriations do not translate into loyalty towards the former colonial power, as the author shows in his analysis of the “distinct language of the uprising” (p. 133) in Chapter Four.

Respecting the author’s commitment to symmetry, the next three chapters concentrate on the Chinese administration. Chapter Five exhumes the interpretation of the uprising held by the ruling power, heavily influenced by the recent memory of the so-called War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (*kang Ri zhanzheng* 抗日戰爭) in China (1937-1945). In this context, Chapter Six focuses on how this shared experience on the Mainland permeates the mentality of the men who participate in the machinery of repression in Taiwan in early March 1947 – from the highest-ranking political officials to the soldiers at the lowest level. The repression per se is addressed in Chapter Seven, wherein Victor Louzon offers a detailed chronology capturing the shift from blind massacre to selective violence, and delves into the unresolved question of the number of victims. The final chapter revisits the years that followed the 228 Incident with the impossible normalisation of Taiwan’s status within the Republic of China, as the repression machinery is progressively adapted to the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists.

Victor Louzon’s tour de force lies in his constant attention paid to the historicity of political societies across the Taiwan Strait, enabling him to deliver a complex yet clear reading of this event. One of the main contributions of his book is the disclosure of two non-mutually exclusive “incidents” within the 228 Incident: that of the Taiwanese insurgents initiating a revolt in the streets, and that of the Taiwanese elite pursuing a quest for political reform. Victor Louzon also expands the 228 Incident beyond itself by portraying it as a focal point between the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Pacific War, and the Chinese Civil War. Past and current political and memorial distortions

are addressed in an epilogue that is all the more topical, given that the People’s Republic of China continues to call upon Taiwan to return to the “embrace of the fatherland” (*zuguo de huaibao* 祖國的懷抱). Finally, taking violence as an analytical prism allows Victor Louzon to draw on other case studies distant in both space and time, such as the Camp Grant Massacre in 1871, or French soldiers’ testimonies during the Great War. As a result, he implicitly enables the mobilisation of the 228 Incident in potential subsequent research about violent action in other regions and periods. This reciprocal movement undoubtedly contributes to academic knowledge in its most noble form, and to the opening up of area studies.