

Hard on the heels of the referendums in Taiwan, Hong Kong held its first legislative election since the electoral system was overhauled under the direction of Beijing.

According to the new system, 40 of the 90 seats in the Hong Kong Legislative Council (LegCo) were elected by the 1,500-member Election Committee, which has only one non-establishment member.

Previously, 35 of the 70 LegCo seats — 50 percent — were directly elected, but this time, 20 of the newly increased 90 seats — less than one-quarter — were directly elected, and were instead elected by the committee.

Every candidate was also vetted by the Hong Kong Committee for Safeguarding National Security to ensure that they were considered “patriots.”

These changes were the result of a direct intervention by Beijing, contravening Hong Kong's Basic Law so that the Chinese Communist Party can exercise complete control over the territory.

The move demonstrates to the world what “democracy with Chinese characteristics” looks like, and also shows Taiwan what a real autocracy looks like, or what it means to say that an electoral process is “already dead.”

Although the result of the “election” was the expected landslide “victory” for pro-establishment factions, Hong Kongers had long known that it was going to be a “fake election with real appointments,” and so stayed away from polling stations, refusing to participate in a political farce.

Even though the Hong Kong government detained individuals who had urged people to not vote or to cast spoiled ballots, and had even issued warnings to the foreign press and to overseas Hong Kong citizens, it was in the end unable to quash Hong Kongers' resolve to

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frustrate the election.

Given the iron resolve of Hong Kongers to safeguard their democracy and their freedoms, the Hong Kong government and pro-establishment factions pulled out all the stops to get people out to vote, even setting up polling stations close to the border with China to make it more convenient for Hong Kong citizens living in China to cast their ballots.

Even then, official statistics showed that there was an unprecedentedly low turnout of 30.2 percent, about half the turnout of the previous election.

Even more embarrassing for Beijing was that Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) said that the low voter turnout showed that the government is “doing well” and has a high level of credibility, “because the people do not have a strong demand to choose different lawmakers to supervise the government.”

She said that the elite class that had grown out of the political system during the time of British colonial rule had long ago shown itself to be thoroughly corrupt when exposed to Chinese bureaucratic culture.

Since the protest movement objecting to extradition to China began in 2019, the deteriorating situation in Hong Kong has consistently demonstrated that China does not sit well with universal values, and that Hong Kong has been on the front line in the democratic battle against China.

Meanwhile, in Taiwan, which should understand Hong Kong's predicament more keenly than any other country, there seems to be a common assumption that nothing bad will happen if it does not provoke “the dragon,” despite China's constant infiltration and intimidation, and a profound sense of alarm and awareness of Beijing's hostile intent.

Even more worrying is the number of people who seem to think that warnings of this infiltration and cognitive warfare are no more than deliberate smear tactics for purely political purposes, and refuse to believe that China is constantly trying to harm Taiwan.

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As a new immigrant to Taiwan who has personally witnessed how Hong Kong has deteriorated under Chinese rule from a prosperous territory to its current circumstance, I am very concerned about Taiwan's future.

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