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# China Leadership Completes Transition as President Hu Assumes Military Post

October 28, 2009 04:15 AM

Delegates at the annual session of China's National People's Congress have approved Chinese President Hu Jintao as head of the government's largely figurehead military body, completing a peaceful leadership transition that began more than two years ago. Mr. Hu replaces Jiang Zemin, who was China's president from 1993 until 2003.

With 2,886 'yes' votes, six against and five abstaining, Chinese lawmakers on Sunday named President Hu Jintao the new chairman of the State Central Military Commission, a government body.

Mr. Hu, head of state for two years, has also been head of the more powerful Communist Party Central Military Commission since last September, so Sunday's vote making him head of the governmental military body was seen as largely ceremonial.

However, analysts see the move as significant, because it marks the second time in succession that China's transfer of power has been smooth - in this case, from former President Jiang Zemin and former Premier Zhu Rongji to Mr. Hu and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

Previous leadership transitions of the People's Republic of China were marked by power struggles, purges and, at times, severe violence.

Bruce Jacobs is an Asian studies professor at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. While analysts have hailed the growing maturity of the Chinese Communist Party, Mr. Jacobs points out that a peaceful transition and a democratic transition are not necessarily the same thing.

"Like the last one, it's been reasonably smooth," he said. "Of course, it's an autocratic transition. It's a transition that was decided only by the top very few in the party. It's certainly not a democratic transition where the people have any say at all."

Professor Jacobs and other observers also see the event as marking the moment at which Hu Jintao has fully taken over military matters from Mr. Jiang, and assumed uncontested control over military decision-making.

"In the past, since he didn't actually chair the military committee, major military decisions would have still been subject to the leadership of Jiang Zemin, but now that that transition has taken place, Hu Jintao has leadership of that area," he said.

Unambiguous leadership of the military is seen as crucial at a time when China's communist leaders are enacting an anti-secession law that says Beijing may resort to "non-peaceful" means, if necessary, to reunite Taiwan with the mainland. Deputies are expected to pass the law at the final session of the National People's Congress on Monday.

In its two years in office, Mr. Hu's administration has sought to modernize the military with manpower cutbacks and the installation of high-technology systems. This month, officials announced a boost of more than 12 percent in defense spending for 2005.

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