

Mulroney rakes Liberals for war stand

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Former prime minister Brian Mulroney has blasted the government's decision not to participate in the Iraqi war, saying Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has "repudiated" Canada's traditional allies.

Mr. Mulroney -- prime minister during the 1991 Persian Gulf war and with close ties to the Bush administration -- also condemned the anti-American attitude of many Liberal politicians and suggested Mr. Chrétien allowed it to flourish for political ends.

"For 135 years, Canada has made common cause with Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States in the defence of liberty and freedom around the world," Mr. Mulroney said in an interview on Global TV yesterday.

"Now we have repudiated at a crucial, seminal moment of our history, we have repudiated our allies and our coalition partners of the past, and we have new friends: the Russians, the Chinese and the Germans.

"This represents quite a change, and I want to tell you, I'm one of many Canadians who are dissatisfied with it and regret it profoundly."

Mr. Mulroney had encouraged former U.S. president George Bush to win the United Nations Security Council's support for the first Persian Gulf war, after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

However, he said Mr. Chrétien has ceded control of Canada's foreign policy to other countries by failing to join the U.S. effort after the Security Council refused to sanction it.

"Multilateralism is not an end to itself; it's a means to an end," Mr. Mulroney said.

"We do not and we should not subcontract our foreign policy to the Security Council of the United Nations. This is a gathering of 15 foreigners; we make our own policy."

A spokesman for Mr. Chrétien dismissed Mr. Mulroney's complaints, saying the Prime Minister had made it clear that the government believes that UN weapons inspectors should have been given more time to disarm Iraq.

"The polls show a significant majority of Canadians support the government's position, and Mr. Mulroney's views reflect a minority view," said Jim Munson, director of communications in the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr. Mulroney played down the polls that show nearly two-thirds of respondents support Mr. Chrétien's decision not to participate directly in the Iraq war.

"Just because something is popular doesn't make it right.

"This is a classic example of 'followship,' not leadership." Mr. Mulroney praised British Prime Minister Tony Blair for his "courageous and principled" support for the war, despite opposition in the British public.

"Mr. Chrétien should remember that line from Dante that says that the hottest place in hell is reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis strive to preserve their neutrality."

After a citizenship ceremony in Calgary yesterday, Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson reflected on the war and described the images and sounds being carried on TV and radio as "disturbing."

"I think everybody is disturbed in the world when there is some large problem like this," she told reporters.

She reiterated her support for Canada's position in the conflict.

"We have stated right from the beginning what our position was, and that's what our position is now. And I think we've have to been very consistent."