

FINANCIAL TIMES ARTICLE - WILFRIED MARTENS

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**One man can foster our irreplaceable bonds**

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From Mr Wilfried Martens.

Sir, During my long years of active political engagement in Europe – first as prime minister of Belgium and then as president of the EPP, Europe’s largest political movement of the centre-right – I have always considered transatlantic relations as a priority issue. I have worked very hard to foster and promote relations between the European Union and the US because our bonds are simply irreplaceable. Europe and America share long-standing values and ideals – such as our victorious battles against Fascism and Communism in favour of democracy – and are confronted with common challenges – such as the struggle against international terrorism.

Even though our relationship has experienced some difficulties in recent years as a result of the war in Iraq, I have been determined to seek new channels of communication with American leaders who shared my transatlantic commitment. To my great delight, I had the privilege of meeting Senator John McCain and of subsequently working with him on strengthening the transatlantic relationship on a political level.

I am proud to say that Mr McCain’s resoluteness towards improving the Europe-US relationship has been unparalleled. He has kept an open approach towards his European friends, and has always been ready to listen and discuss problematic issues, while constantly seeking ways to bring the relationship forward. Mr McCain is a leader with a deep understanding of Europe and European politics and has a clear vision for the future of the transatlantic relationship. In his words: “When the United States and Europe stand together, it creates a moral and political force that gives no ground to the enemies of freedom. The world needs us together, and we need each other.”

I have, therefore, decided to endorse the candidature of John McCain for president of the US because I firmly believe that he will bring America closer to Europe. Apart from his transatlantic commitment, his positions on free trade and climate change and his outspoken stance on human rights and democracy are also welcome in Europe. While we will not always agree with President McCain, I am convinced that he is someone who will take our views very seriously and will seek common ground.

John McCain is the statesman that can bring America forward with confidence and pride. I am certain that most Europeans will soon share my conviction about President McCain.

Wilfried Martens,
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Prime Minister of Belgium 1979-92

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