



its maritime mission to protect the shipping routes in the Red Sea from the Iran-backed Houthis, are another major concern for the EU. And there are still EU citizens kept in detention by Iran, such as the Swedish national and official from the Borrell-led European External Action Service Johan Floderus, on allegedly spurious charges of spying for Israel.

Those who lambast EU officials like Michel, Borrell, and Lenarcic for supposedly failing to take a “tough line” against Tehran neglect to explain how these vital interests will be served in the absence of any diplomatic engagement with Iran. Following maximalist demands would be even more absurd at a

time when the United States, Europe’s primary security guarantor, is itself engaged in talks with Tehran, through intermediaries, on de-escalation of tensions in the Middle East and on the nuclear file. The EU, in fact, has an advantage over the US in that it doesn’t need to go through third parties to engage with Iran, since it already has direct channels of communications.

The EU will have to tread carefully in the coming months leading up to the elections of the new president in Iran. Its core interests, as outlined above, remain unchanged whoever is in charge in Tehran. The EU is likely to concentrate on them, even if that would fall far short of

the aspirations to see a democratic change in Iran. The possible elevation of the current deputy foreign minister and chief nuclear negotiator Ali Baqeri Kani to the position of foreign minister may cause some advances in reviving at least some form of a nuclear agreement. As to the presidential elections, the most likely course of action for the EU will be to wait and see and then deal with whoever emerges on the top, mindful of the fact that in the Islamic Republic president has limited room in setting foreign policy, with the final decisions to be taken by the Leader.

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Martyr President