In Spite of the US Attempting to Discredit the Beijing Olympics, It Will Succeed

Washington’s policy of confrontation with China, including in the form of discrediting the Beijing Winter Olympics, only results in the US presenting itself as a complete failure. And a direct indication of the failure of its attempted “diplomatic boycott” of the Olympics was Washington’s request for visas from China for some US officials who, despite earlier statements from the White House, are planning to attend the Games.

However, individual “Nordic states,” perhaps due to failures in national communications caused by heavy snowfalls or as a result of “winter hibernation” of their officials, seem to have missed Washington’s intention to move away from the “diplomatic boycott” and, in an effort to demonstrate their vassal allegiance to the US, continue to declare their decision not to send official delegations to the Beijing Winter Olympics. For instance, the Netherlands and Denmark have announced such a decision. In early December, Lithuania decided to join the “diplomatic boycott” of the Beijing Olympics. However, Sweden, which too decided not to send its government officials to the Beijing Olympics, cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason, and the sports minister of this Scandinavian country, Anders Ygeman, made a clumsy curtsey towards China in saying: “This is not a diplomatic boycott.” Estonian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Kristina Ots has also announced that neither Estonian President Alar Karis nor members of the government will attend the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics, apparently hoping - for some reason - that without their presence the international sporting event will not take place.
In this regard, it must be recalled that the Beijing Olympics are a global event for athletes and winter sports fans, not a stage for showboating politicians pursuing personal agendas. And if officials of some countries, after failing to receive invitations, started to say that they will not go to the Olympics, then they simply want to please their own anti-Chinese forces, tarnish the image of the PRC and achieve personal political gain. But this will in no way affect the success of the event, let alone the eagerness with which the international community awaits it.

Russia has already stated that it has extensive information about the aggressive campaign by the US and its obedient allies to discredit the Beijing Olympics. Nevertheless, Moscow has stressed that all who cherish the ideals of sport, the ideals of humanism, the values of common humanity, will of course express their solidarity with athletes, coaches, all participants and organizers of the forthcoming Olympic Games. It’s a known fact, for example, that Russian President Vladimir Putin, despite the difficult epidemiological situation, will be attending the opening ceremony of the XXIV Winter Olympics and holding talks with PRC’s General Secretary Xi Jinping on the sidelines. In December last year, the Russian leader said during talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping via videoconference that Russia and China supported each other on international sports cooperation, including in rejecting any attempts to politicize sport and the Olympic movement.

According to China’s Global Times, several top leaders and officials of international organizations, such as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene, have already confirmed their planned attendance of the Olympics.

China will present the world with a simple, safe and exciting Olympic event and will actively try to contribute even more to the international Olympic cause. In his New Year address, China’s President and General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping promised that China would make every effort to give the world a great Olympics. According to him, the world is waiting, but the country is ready. On January 1, the IOC President Thomas Bach said the IOC was looking forward to the start of the Winter Games and was very much hoping that Beijing would make history as the first city to host both the Winter and Summer Olympics.

As the German newspaper Das Erste points out, the Games should go perfectly, and China has spared no expense or effort, building new sports facilities and Olympic villages, hospitals, isolation centers, highways and high-speed rail lines around the capital. China’s leaders have placed emphasis on the sustainability of the upcoming Games. Beijing clearly intends to prevent the coronavirus from “entering” the country and spreading, fearing above all the more infectious “omicron” strain, as it is now clear that many Western vaccines do not protect against contracting it. The “closed-circuit” system, a kind of Chinese know-how aimed at maximizing the separation of thousands of the Olympics participants and guests from ordinary citizens of the country, starts right from the airport. All athletes (according to the IOC, there will be about 2,900 athletes in total), sports officials and journalists arriving for the Olympics will be separated from other international passengers by setting up separate passport control lanes and isolating them completely from other passengers. And, as the IOC acknowledged, such an arrival procedure works very smoothly, as committee officials witnessed for themselves when they arrived in Beijing in early January.

Dedicated lanes have also been created for vehicles involved in transporting members of the Olympic and Paralympic movement. The system has been in place on the roads since January 21 and will run until March 16. Recently, ordinary Beijingers have even been urged not to try to help Olympic vehicles if they were to be involved in an accident, as “professionals” would immediately be called in to do so. This was done, again, not so much for the convenience of the guests, but rather to maximize the separation of foreigners and locals in order to control the spread of COVID-19.

A dedicated traffic system has also been organized for high-speed rail transport, as part of the competition will take place in cities neighboring the capital. In addition, most ski resorts in Hebei province, where many skiing and snowboarding competitions will take place, have been closed to the public until March 30.

Beijing has even markedly reduced the number of participants in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games compared to the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008. Whereas 14 years ago the four-hour opening ceremony drew 15,000 performers, this time only 3,000 will be involved and the duration of event was reduced to an hour and a half. However, as chief ceremony director Zhang Yimou, who also staged the previous Games, explained, the abandonment of the previous “huge crowd” strategy was not so much due to the coronavirus, but rather to place emphasis on high technology and a desire to focus on simplicity.

At the same time, the heat of Western passion in the run-up to the Olympics remains quite hot. Western countries, and against this background China itself, are preparing for battles not only in sports but in politics as well. Chinese authorities have warned Olympic athletes that they will be “punished” if they stage anti-Beijing protests during the
Winter Games. Speaking at a virtual briefing organized by the Chinese embassy in Washington on January 19, Yang Shu, deputy director general of the Beijing 2022 International Relations Department, said: “Any expression that is in line with the Olympic spirit I’m sure will be protected, while anything and any behavior or speeches that are against the Olympic spirit, especially against Chinese laws and regulations, will be subject to a certain punishment.” The official added that the cancellation of accreditation was a potential penalty as recommended by the organizers. And while one of the rules of the Olympic Charter states that “No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas,” this requirement was relaxed last year: the IOC made it clear that athletes are free to express their opinions on any issue at press conferences and in interviews, as long as this does not take place during the competition or award ceremonies.

With less than two weeks remaining before the Olympics open, the first planes carrying the competitors have already flown to Beijing. Artificial snow, artificial intelligence, artificial obstacles for the COVID-19 virus. China seems to have thought of everything. One can only wait and see how this will work, and wish Beijing success in hosting this crucial international event.

*Vladimir Platov, expert on the Middle East, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”.*