Medal model predicts Winter Olympics leaders

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Sochi on the Black Sea coast in Russia will host the XXII Olympic Winter Games and XI Paralympic Winter Games in 2014 which country will win what number of medals is open to debate. A study published in the *International Journal of Economic Policy in Emerging Economies* suggest that the USA will win the most models followed by Germany and Canada and then Russia, with China arriving ninth.

Economist, Wladimir Andreff, based in Lédignan, France, suggests that gross domestic product (GDP) is the major determinant of medal winners at the Olympics. Various other factors play a minor role in the final outcome and he has now analysed the relevant economics data from the nations taking part in the Games from 1964 to 2010 to arrive at a leader board for next year's Winter Olympics. He adds that given the rapid economic growth of China it is only a matter of time before it reaches one of the top slots.

Andreff has calculated that per capita GDP, a nation's population and the endowment it receives in ski and winter sports resorts can predict the outcome of the Winter Games with a degree of certainty. His prediction conflicts, of course, with the Russian government's suggestion that the Russian Federation will be overall winner in Sochi. This is despite the outstanding performance of the host nation at the 2008 Beijing Summer Games. He points out that The former Soviet Union was for many decades a top-ranking Olympic performer at both the Summer and Winter Games finding itself ahead of or second only to the USA .However, economic and political transition and the break-up of the

USSR have disrupted the medal haul for the former high achiever, suggests Andreff.

Of course, surprises often happen in sport. "My predictions on the Winter Olympics should be taken with a pinch of salt," Andreff concedes. Russia has not recovered well from the world banking crisis despite its growth following the 1998 recession. China meanwhile is growing rapidly. The biggest of surprises might be that China overtakes other nations sooner rather than later as it did in Beijing and that Russia slides further down the medals table. However, retrospective prediction of the 2008 Olympics based on Andreff's system correctly identified the medal leaders, so his medal model may well turn out to be right again, just don't bet on it.

  More information: "Economic development as major determinant of Olympic medal wins: predicting performances of Russian and Chinese teams at Sochi Games" in *Int. J. Economic Policy in Emerging Economies*, 2013, 6, 314-340

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