

China: Intraglobal Positioning for a Prevailing Superpower

A Senior Political Science Thesis
(Pols 404)

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Dedicated to the following individuals:

My mom:

Thanks for all that you've done for me over the years, for always being there for me, and for never giving up on me. Essentially, thanks for everything!

Sarah Bontrager:

You're my best friend, and I can't even begin to describe how you've made me a better person over the years.

Courtney Richline:

Thanks for always remembering to laugh for me, for putting up with me, and for reminding me to smile and be myself.

So, let us not be blind to our differences—but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal...Confident and unafraid, we labor on—not toward a strategy of annihilation but toward a strategy of peace.

*~President John Fitzgerald Kennedy
Commencement Speech, American University
10 June 1963*

Abstract

In order to determine the ability of the People's Republic of China to become an international superpower, three elements must be analyzed and compared to the current superpower, the United States, and a former superpower, modern Russia. First, using the gross domestic product of China and the current oil consumption rate to determine technology level, analysis demonstrates that China is an economically stable in comparison to the United States and Russia. Second, analysis of China's political system reveals that China is politically stable and meets overall criterion for superpower status. Finally, the military of China reveals an overall stability and meets the third overall criterion, thus meeting all three criteria for becoming an international superpower.

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Introduction

In recent history, the title of global “Superpower” has been bestowed upon two nations, the United States and Russia. Typically, these nations directly controlled, or via proxy, the world’s stockpile of resources. In the immediate future, with the demands of the world placed upon largely finite resources, world leaders must either work together or play an increasingly treacherous game of “resource chess” in order to ensure that their native constituencies maintain an acceptable quality of life. However, with an exceptionally large industrialized population base, an even larger military capability, and a rapidly modernizing political force, Chinese leaders are quickly coming into the forefront of international relations.

“Meanwhile, for the rest of us, it is time to rethink a lot of comfortable assumptions and begin taking more seriously China's large potential downside” (Waldron, ¶ 12). This statement, in 2002, from columnist Arthur Waldron in his article entitled “China’s economic façade” echoes American lawyer-turned China doomsday theorist Gordon Chang. In a speech to Seoul National University in 2004, republished in an online article entitled “The Case for China's Coming Collapse” by Todd Thacker, Chang stated, “China will not rule the world this century...The tipping point will come in this decade, sometime before 2011. The Communist Party will be gone, replaced by a new system” (Thacker, ¶ 5). Chang published a book in 2001 entitled The Coming Collapse of China. At least three years following the release of his book, Chang toured and spun a web of doomsday scenarios for the CCP and the PRC as a whole. During Chang’s touring, the PRC has only gained strength and increased its growth rates. Chang seems to be of the opinion that the PRC is not a growing nation and will

crumble at the first non-Mao approved bump in the road. Chang's opinion seems to defy reason. Within the question and answer section of his website, gordonchang.com, Chang cites French social researcher Alexis de Tocqueville in drawing parallels to the popular French revolution during de Tocqueville's time and to the, according to Chang, almost predictable worker revolution within mainland China.

Further perpetuating the myth that China is not a superpower, one may examine testimony given to the Foreign Relations Committee of the United States Senate by Catharin E. Dalpino, an Adjunct Professor of Southeast Asian Studies at Georgetown and George Washington Universities. As published in the Congressional Quarterly, Dalpino's testimony reflects an extremely archaic, but still held, misconception in both the academic and physical realms. "As the world's only global superpower, Washington's attention is often diverted from Southeast Asia to crises in other regions" (Dalpino testimony, security ¶ 9). The United States is not the only global superpower. Academics, such as professor Dalpino, and lawyer-turned doomsday prophet Chang, represent only the tip of a group determined to boast that China is on a path towards self-destruction. Unfortunately, their efforts are in vain. The PRC is not merely a nation rising to power on a singular platform, such as the possession of nuclear weapons, but rather the PRC is a nation securing a place through technological developments and economic improvements across the nation.

In analyzing the "worth" of the PRC to join the arena of international superpowers, this study chose to analyze the areas of economy, politics, and the military of the PRC, the United States, and the Russian Federation. These states were chosen for comparison because in order to justify the PRC as a superpower, it should

meet or exceed certain benchmarks of the one current superpower, the United States, and the one former superpower, the current shell Russian Federation. The area of economy was chosen in part because of the belief that money is an oblique force behind all actions undertaken in the world. Nations could not function without some form of income and economic system. Of course, a system to manage money and personnel is critical to maintaining internal stability. The decision to address politics as the second issue of a superpower was due to the “hidden hand” of money permeating society. However, as many nations of the world will readily attest, some form of military is vital for establishing a layer of external security. For this reason, an exploration of the military capabilities of each nation is analyzed as the third benchmark of superpower status. Ultimately, the author will arrive at a conclusion diametrically opposed to both Chang and Dalpino. The time is ripe for the PRC to earn the title of “Superpower,” whether by diplomacy or by force.

ECONOMICS:

While some measures of a civilization’s progress, such as computers, are growing smaller and more powerful, one societarial measure seems to be operating under the modus operandi of “bigger is better.” In order to provide services, governmental or otherwise, the population of any nation must commute to and from their places of employment. While, undoubtedly, some individuals are within walking and biking distance of their places of employment, the vast majority of people around the world commute to work. Combustion-powered engines, better known as the driving force behind automobiles of all varieties, consume oil. While

environmentalists may sound various alarms about the exponentially increasing oil consumption, an irony exists because oil consumption is an accurate barometer of a nation's overall health. Higher consumption equals an increase in motorized products such as cars, trains, or planes. Perhaps the increased consumption merely signals an inevitable rise as generations of aging automobiles expend oil quicker as they race towards the end of their operational timeline. Within each nation's economics section, China, the United States, and the Russian Federation, the author will explore the effects of population, oil consumption and production, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with the intent of showing that the PRC is an economic superpower on the international stage.

The consumption of oil is an important factor in economy. In addition to aiding the establishment of a GDP for a nation, the consumption of oil also demonstrates the technological ability of a nation. Oil consumption, a component of the aggregate GDP, is so invasive into all areas of society, that it is an accurate indicator—in and of itself—for the strength of an economy or nation. While it could be argued that a rising dependency on oil is an inherently weakening position for a nation, the author will argue that the figures represented herein are accurate barometers of technological attainment, and utilization, by a nation. Higher oil consumption equals more oil-consuming products possessed by a nation. Therefore, nations with legions of mechanical objects—from tanks and planes to cars and SUV's—will need a steady source of oil, either domestically produced or foreign imports, to maintain their level of technology. As stated previously, the level of oil consumption and production helps formulate the aggregate level of measurement known as GDP.

Usually measured as an annual figure, simply stated, the GDP is the overall aggregate of materials, services, and other goods produced within a nation's borders between two points on a specific timeframe. When ranked in relation to other nations, this figure often demonstrates the rising or falling industrialization and modernization efforts within a nation. Additionally, to some extent, GDP can generate a general pattern of a nation's workforce in terms of overall efficiency and productivity. A nation seriously lacking in modernization and industrial efforts, capital generation, or market sustainability cannot unilaterally survive on the world's international stage.

At times, politics can seem to dictate whether the world will continue rotating; however, without oil, the current world would dive cataclysmically into a schism no political spin-doctor could fix. Even as an extension of political whims, the movements of military units are largely defined by the amount of petroleum or gasoline, both oil derivatives, can be transported along with deploying units. The world currently depends upon oil consumption to fuel all other drives, desires, and aspects of our perpetually interdependent society. Contained within the borders of the PRC, and specifically fueling oil consumption and boosting the economy, is the largest population on the planet.

China:

Economically, the PRC has an unprecedented advantage over the rest of the world. The massive labor pool fuels the economy, in turn fueling the wallets of the consumers, in turn fueling the "tech toys" and oil using products introduced into the PRC mainland. The need for oil rises in correlation to the rise in GDP. With a July

2005 population estimate by the Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook of approximately 1.3 billion individuals (§ 20), the PRC contains slightly over 20 percent of the Earth's population of approximately 6.4 billion (CIA, world page, § 20) individuals. This figure is larger than the aggregate population of the superpower of the United States and the former superpower of the Russian Federation combined.¹

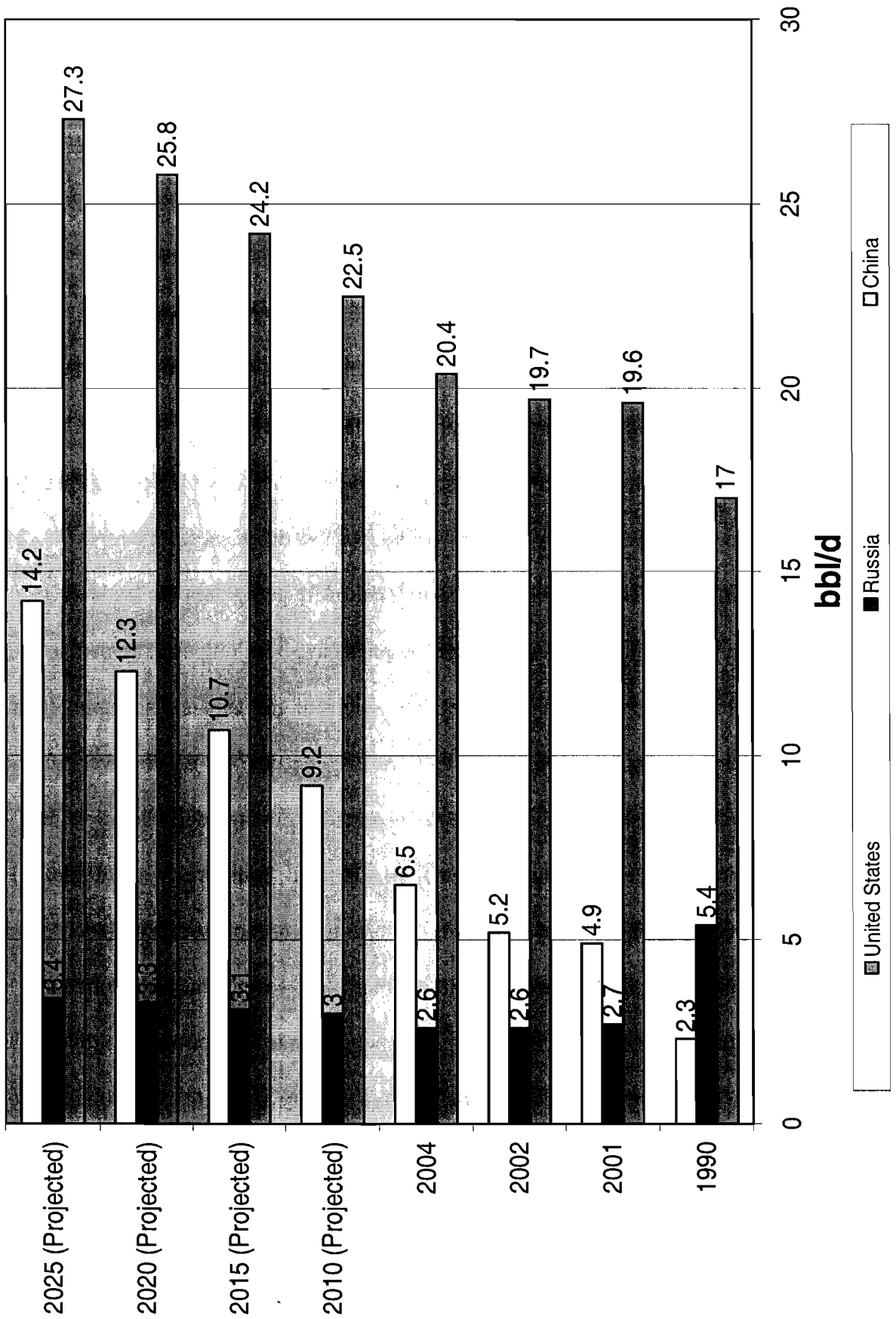
Further accentuating the Chinese need for oil, Martin Walker explains, "China in 1994 consumed 5 barrels of oil per capita (compared to 32 barrels per capita in Germany and 53 barrels per capita in the United States)" (9). Walker eventually presents an interesting hypothesis, "Even if the Chinese continue to consume oil at their current rate...by 2005, the United States and China will consume equal amounts of oil" (9).² China's oil dependency is not an Achilles heel nor is it the key to their catastrophic proletarian-led revolt as predicted by Chang. Rather, their oil consumption is merely reflective of a growing domestic body using mechanical objects hungry for oil and a military developing new technology and maintaining old technology (see military section).

In response to Walker's projections, the data in Table 1.1, created with 2005 data from the Energy Information Administration, illustrates that experts may be wrong with their assumptions and should not be relied upon absolutely to predict the future.

¹ Unfortunately, as noted in the *New Statesman*, this massive labor force and growing economy is subject to the demands of any developing, or fully industrialized, nation "...China and India have the same Achilles heel: growing dependence on oil imports as the consequence of economic and population growth" (Almond, 23). Simon Bromley, in the *Middle East Report* explains, "...despite the fact that oil markets have become structurally freer...a major imbalance remains between supply...and demand..." (21).

² As cited in "Demand for SUV's on the rise in China, one may point out that in 2003, "Around 17 new SUV models were introduced in China during the first half of this year, equal to the number of newly-launched cars and sedans" (para. 11). The article also notes that, "Industry statistics indicate that SUV demand in China stood at around 60,000 units during the first half of this year, while sales of domestically-made passenger cars totaled (sic) 842,800 units" and that "Soh [director of Beijing Jeep] forecast that the SUV market would hit 150,000 units this year" (2003, para. 13,14).

Table 1.1
Millions of Barrels consumed per day (bbl/d)

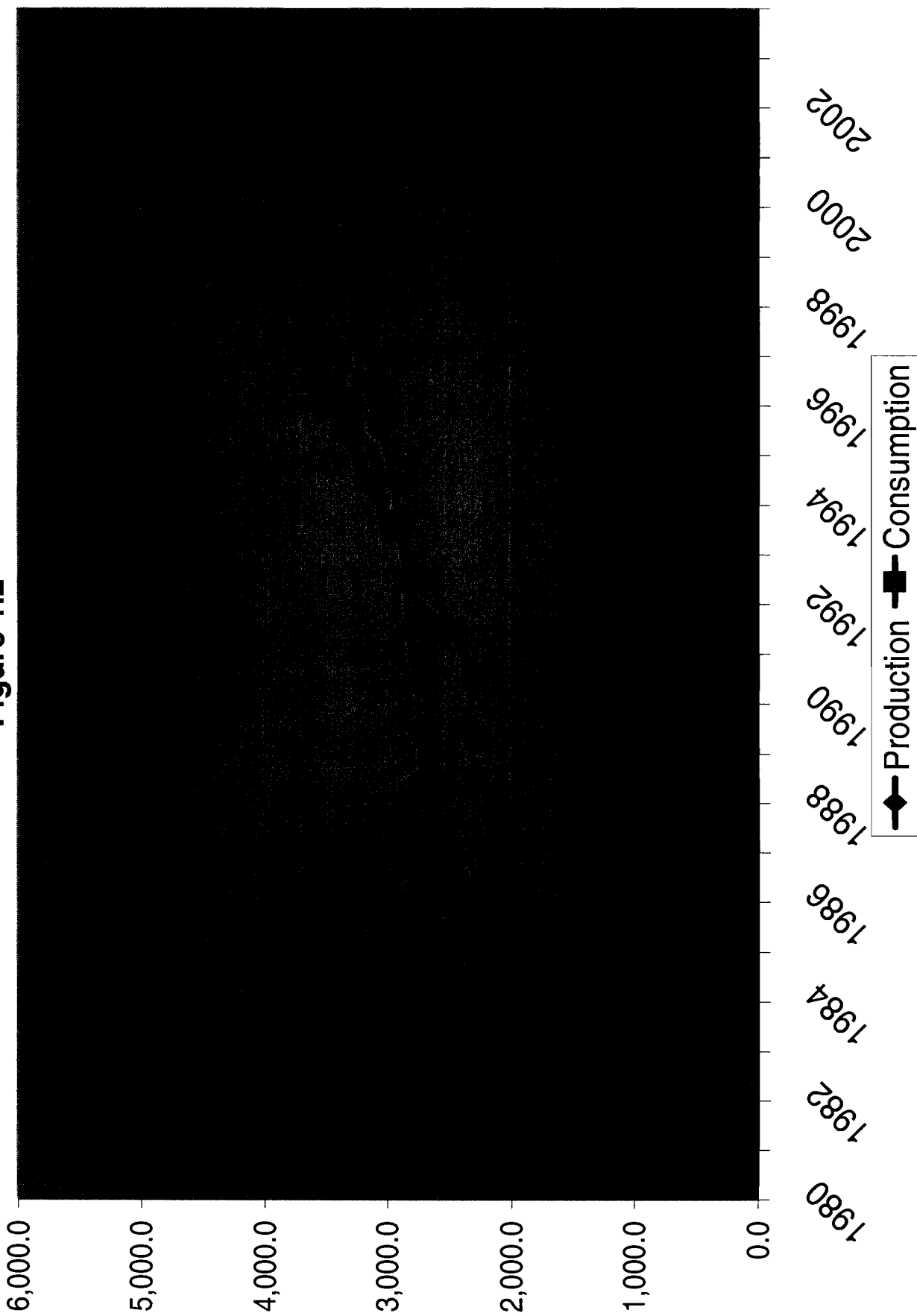


However, projection inaccuracies notwithstanding, in this instance the PRC followed the course of countless other nations and did not adhere to specified growth and projection calculations. According to Table 1.1, the PRC almost matched their 1990-2001 bbl/d increase of 2.6 bbl/d during 2001-2004. For comparison, during 2001-2004, bbl/d rose .8 and -.1 for the United States and Russia, respectively.

While intriguing, Walker's hypothesis of oil consumption was refuted in 2005 by Jehangir Pocha through an article in the *New Perspectives Quarterly*. Citing Beijing Institute of Technology researcher Zheng Hongfei, Pocha refutes, "Even if China's oil consumption doubles by 2020, it will still only be half that of the U.S." (Pocha, 2005, ¶ 24). However, Walker's hypothesis was not without accuracies. In a report commissioned by Rice University, Research Fellow in petro-strategic studies Xiaojie Xu commented, "Indigenous oil and gas supplies have been outpaced by demand since 1993...Chinese experts have made their projections of gas demand and supply to the year 2020 showing a growing gap for the next two decades" (41). Whatever facts and figures may be obtained, manipulated, and reported about the People's Republic of China, one may be assured that their addiction upon oil, both foreign and domestic, is not a concept which will be not be assuaged with time or money, nor will their reported dependence upon oil be completely without merit. However, time only delivers dwindling supplies, price increases, and the inclination to utilize force, political or otherwise, to ensure that the quality of life for a country's citizenry is maintained for the current generation.

Figure 1.2, produced from the data obtained on the United States Energy Information Administration website, illustrates the immediate need for additional oil or

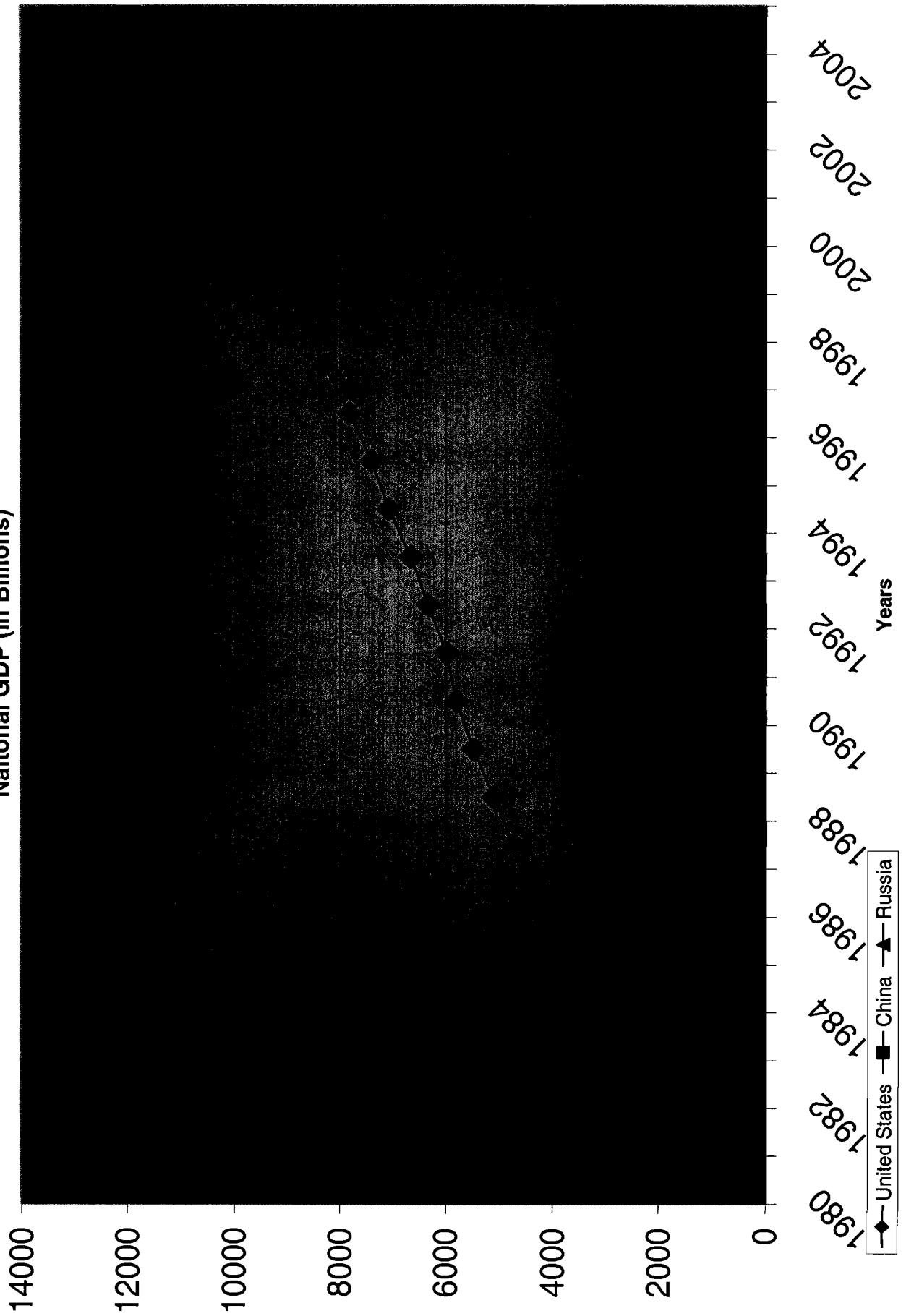
Chinese Oil (Thousands of barrels per day)
Figure 1.2



energy alternatives. With a rising demand, the problem of oil consumption no longer remains in the realm of theory. The International Energy Agency's December 2004 Monthly Oil Report states, "In addition to the weather, the main wildcard is China. We [the IEA] expect continued Chinese economic expansion to keep fuelling steep oil demand growth through 2005 and beyond" (IEA, ¶ 3). China, as a rising superpower, is using an increasing amount of oil per year; additionally, their GDP is quickly rising to levels rivaling the United States. Figure 1.21, created with data obtained from EconStats, exemplifies the GDP of the United States, the PRC, and Russia. As can be seen, the current Chinese GDP is almost identical with the 1995 GDP of the United States. What can also be seen is that the Chinese GDP is rising at a slightly faster rate than that of the United States.

Naturally, an environmental argument is appropriate against the supposition that oil usage is an appropriate benchmark for the level of a particular society. While alternative technologies that produce cleaner energy sources are preferable, desires must yield to practical science. Oil consumption, while harmful to the environment, is currently unavoidable in order to maintain objects such as ships, planes, and automobiles. While an admirable ideal, an overnight switch to a cleaner source of energy to decrease oil consumption is not currently feasible. Oil consumption is still an accurate barometer to assess the technological level and needs of a civilization. A higher rate of oil consumption, in this case measured by bbl/d, is inherently representative to the level of technology utilized by a nation. While the "level" is purely an academic aggregate, it physically manifests itself through the number of

Figure 1.21
Naitonal GDP (In Billions)



tanks, automobiles, planes, trains, and other oil consuming products that a nation uses, thus compiling the aggregate.

If trends continue at their current rate, itself a highly unlikely scenario for zero deviation in growth rates to occur, China will not be in a position to surpass the United States for many years. However, the point is not for China to surpass the United States and claim the title of the country with the highest GDP in the world. The point is that, unfortunately, China has been undeservedly regulated as a developing nation for far too long. Economically, that trend was shattered in early 2005 by an article on the British Broadcasting Corporation's news website. The article bluntly quotes Lester Brown, president of Earth Policy Institute, "China is no longer just a developing country," he [Lester Brown] said, "It is an emerging economic superpower, one that is writing economic history" (§ 14). The article also mentions that the economy is, "...growing at an even faster rate than expected" (§ 9), further reinforcing the hypothesis that the GDP will not stay steady, but rather engage in an even steeper climb towards the blue line, in Figure 1.21, representing the United States.

Discussing China's overall economic health and the permeation of Chinese economics into other nations, Political Science professor Denny Roy argued in his 1994 article "Hegemon on the horizon? China's threat to east Asian security," "China's rapid economic growth also raises the possibility of regional power transition of the type some theorists have identified as extraordinarily dangerous" (164). In discussing a growing regional power, Roy states that "Although a delicate peace now prevails between China and Japan, it would probably not survive China's emergence as a top-rank economic and military power" (165). Disregarding military power for a moment,

one cannot help but logically surmise that the PRC emerging as an economic power, an already occurred event, has produced repercussions extending far beyond the Japanese coastline and the Pacific Rim. To qualify this particular argument, one may offer into evidence the fact that the PRC economy has been slowly encroaching itself into other countries for many years already. With a robust GDP, one could logically conclude that not all products produced within the PRC's borders are domestically purchased. Naturally, this argument extends beyond clothing and general consumer products. "Made in China" labels can be found on many different items from clothes to electronics. Due to their large population, the PRC has the raw work force from which to engage in a wide variety of manufacturing and economic endeavors for both foreign and domestic enterprises. Assuming that all factors are equal and only two countries exist in the world, the United States and the PRC, a citizen of the United States must think about how many labels that they have seen in their lifetime containing the phrase "Made in China" compared to the number of "Made in the U.S.A." labels. Even if the other nations are added into the mix of countries, if the same citizen hypothesizes that market penetration in other countries is no higher than that in the United States, the amount and percentage of products originating from the PRC and proliferating into other nations is staggering!

In combating economic growth scenarios, Roy briefly explores the politically popular option, at least from the perspective of the United States and the western world, of economic sanctions against the PRC (166). As nations such as Iraq, Libya, and Cuba have discovered, economic sanctions quickly metastasize into humanitarian disasters waiting to happen. However, that option falters when one considers that the

number of economic refugees emigrating from a country with a population in excess of 1.3 billion would be astronomical. Roy eventually resolves to his argument in 1994, which remains the most viable option in 2005. "...continuing to abet China's growth, while hoping defensive balancing will not be necessary, is the least problematic option for the outside world" (167). Even with a worldwide coordination of complete economic sanctions against the PRC, temporarily ignoring the economic refugee problem, would the world not suffer from a severe and tangible lack of goods made in the PRC? If nations were to simply "cut off" economic ties to the PRC, much as the United States has done to many nations politically, the economy of those embargoing nations would quickly feel the sting from the loss of cheap labor and cheaper goods. While trying to combat the initial "growing pain" from the loss of business with the PRC, a nation with a 2004 GDP slightly under \$8 trillion (Figure 1.21), some nations would simply implode while trying to restart production in an attempt to combat the effects felt from losing substantial amounts of goods manufactured in the PRC. If any nation were to attempt comprehensive economic isolation against the PRC, without prior preparation to ensure that domestic manufacturing and retail were adequate to handle the onslaught of a massive shift in production, the effects would be catastrophic and perhaps resulting in conditions akin to the 1992 implosive destruction of the USSR.

Finally, in the 2005 article "China, Iran, and Central Asia: The dawning of a new partnership," Sharif Shuja argues, "China is a fast emerging global power and has registered rapid economic growth. It remains the sole long-term challenger to United States hegemony" (145). Shuja also states, "Chinese petro-diplomacy already extends

worldwide as far as Africa. It [the PRC] is establishing surveillance stations, naval facilities and airstrips to safeguard the oil route from the Gulf to the South China Sea” (145). China seems to be taking increasingly aggressive, and potentially explosive if geographic or political buffer zones collide, steps in order to preserve, maintain, and defend their oil-based interests worldwide. Shuja perfectly creates a forward to the diplomacy and military sections of the author’s argument. In order to maintain their economy, and the levels of new and aging technology, as respectively noted in the China Daily article and the military section—within its borders—the PRC must secure and defend their worldwide oil production and supply lines.

China’s economy, based solely upon the analysis of oil consumption and GDP, is indicative of an acutely developed superpower capable of irrevocably harming the economy of the world if it should suddenly fail. However, the evidence for “sudden collapse” simply does not exist outside of Gordon Chang’s brain. While some news agencies, such as MSNBC, have recently acknowledged the PRC’s economy is moving so fast that it borders on overcapacity³, simply no evidence exists to show that China’s economy is teetering upon a free-fall precipice. While the economy of the PRC may gradually slow, could it not be a natural response of an economy charged and bordering on hyperactivity for an extended period? If Chang is to be believed, *any* slowdown in production signals the beginning of a doomsday scenario for that nation. Chang also seems to believe that the doomsday scenario will result in nationwide governmental capitulation brought upon by a popular proletariat revolution. Unless the PRC economy or government is unable to adapt to the 21st century, the chances of a wide-scale proletariat revolution is minimal at best. The PRC is strong; the PRC is growing,

³ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11033053/>

and the PRC has room to decrease its expansion without triggering a wide-scale collapse.

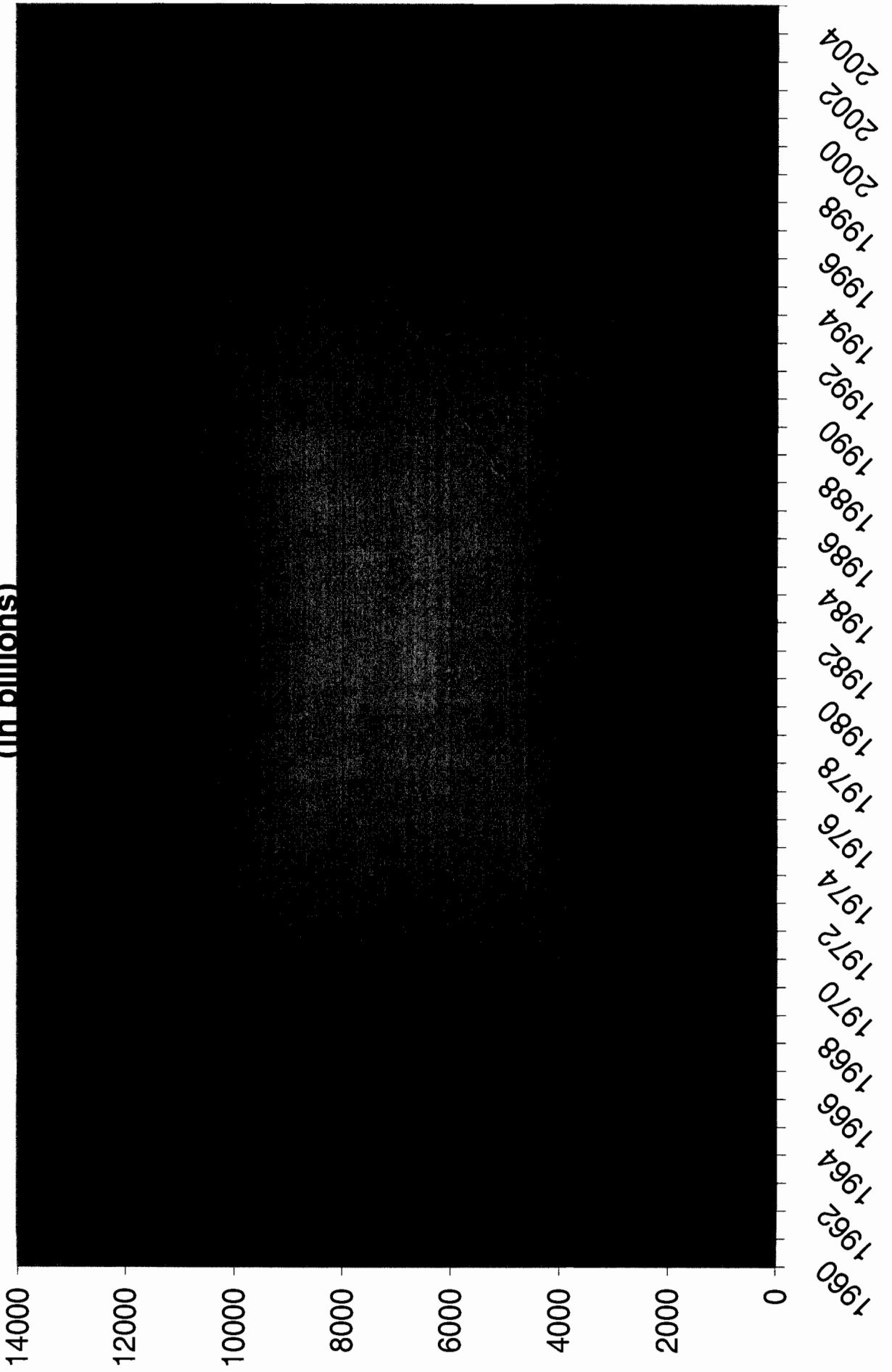
United States:

Figure 1.3 illustrates—produced from data obtained on the website of the Bureau of Economic Analysis—regardless of these military actions, America’s overall GDP has perpetually climbed. The CIA World Factbook states, “The US has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world, with a per capita GDP of \$40,100” (¶56). Figure 1.3 shows that the total American GDP is nearing \$12 trillion with an upwards trend. In the area of economy, the United States is a superpower in both per capita and GDP. The CIA Factbook GDP rank order website, based on 2004 estimates, lists the United States with the highest GDP in the world, followed closely by the European Union aggregate, and China.

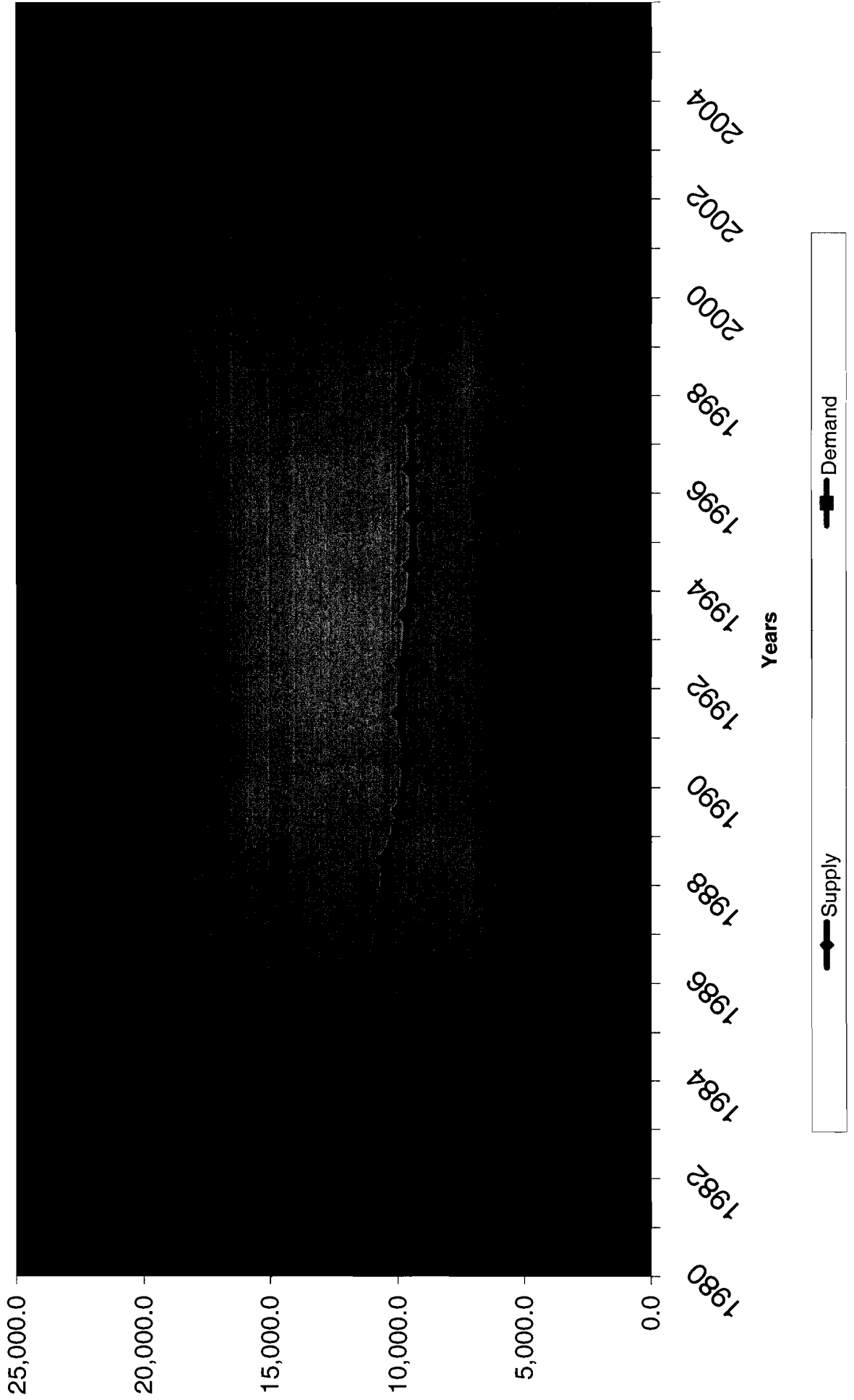
Regardless of the causes, reasons, and effects, of economic upheaval, Figure 1.3 illustrates that the overall GDP and economic health of the United States, labeled an international superpower long before the height of the Cold War in the 1960s, is slanting uphill at an increasing pace. However, while the economic health of a nation is an important indicator of superpower status, one must not take this sole fact and believe it to be a complete measure of a nation’s overall well-being. Oil consumption is an unfortunate indicator of multiple aspects within a nation’s economy and overall well-being.

Table 1.1 and Figure 1.31, constructed with data obtained from the Energy Administration, both illustrate the aggregated perpetually rising need of the United

Figure 1.3
United States GDP 1960-2004
(in billions)



US Oil Demand/Production
Figure 1.31



States in regards to oil consumption. From 1990-2025, if projections in Table 1.1 are accurate, and severe doubt must be inferred about demand deviation equaling zero, the United States will only increase demand by 10.3 bbl/d over the course of 35 years. Like any good consumer, our need grows with respect to our population and the toys of society. The United States demand increase of 10.3 bbl/d, projected over 35 years, is comparable to the PRC's projected 35-year demand increase of 11.9 bbl/d. However, considering that the PRC started with a demand, in 1990, of 2.3 bbl/d, one may conclude that efforts must be made in order to ensure that both nations, each projected—shortly—to be in excess of 10 bbl/d, are able to maintain quality of life requirements for their native constituencies. While the solution to maintaining quality of life may rely upon the development and usage of alternative forms of energy, no option appears readily available for immediate or large-scale use. Therefore, one must conclude that oil is an item the world will utilize for the immediate future.

Shuja's 2005 article, while mentioning the Chinese interest in diversifying their oil stocks and protecting their supply lines, also mentions the intrinsic American interest in undertaking the same endeavors and gaining an advantage in economically based political games. Shuja states, "The US now has troops and military bases here [Azerbaijan] and the Bush Administration has signaled that it wishes to remain a military presence in Central Asia. Washington aims to...decrease the chance of any one country establishing a stranglehold of flows to world markets" (146). Shuja blatantly, but also appropriately, states, "Strategically, the United States would like to block China's entry into the region" (146). The United States, increasingly, is diversifying its oil assets and attempting to deny other nations their lifeblood.

However, if the United States wishes to prevent one nation from holding a bottleneck on oil flow to the world market, should they not focus on assisting many nations in establishing oil routes in high-capacity zones such as Central Asia, the Middle East, and off the eastern coast of Africa? Instead of working together, Americans are losing standing in the international community by being overtly—and overly—aggressive, belligerent, and xenophobic until forced to seek a foreign nation’s resources. Succinctly speaking, the United States is alienating individuals and nations for minor short-term gain. Wars for oil, under the guise of ousting rogue leaders, and imperialism thinly veiled in the façade of freedom have rocked the world for the past half-decade. At the very least, the actions of the United States are near-sighted and brazenly selfish; however, the near-sightedness of the United States falls closer to the negligent and foolish side of the continuum.

Barring a substantial shift, or switch to an alternative energy source, if Figure 1.31 is accurate, the gap between domestic production and domestic demand will slowly widen until the United States is forced to abandon, alter, or otherwise modify national oil consumption. However, one can assume that, if the United States consumption continues to outpace demand, many other countries are encountering the same economic dilemma. The singular, interwoven, issue that will drive the 21st century is one of nations attempting to solve the riddle of how to preserve the flow of oil while minimizing expenditure of capital in addition to maintaining political buffer zones between resource zones, supply lines, and troop deployments.

Many nations will implode, be invaded, or simply fail in their efforts to maintain independence while finding answers to the increasingly treacherous game of

resource chess. With the PRC's growing reliance upon oil, foreign oil in particular, and the United States demonstrating increasingly militaristic responses to secure oil supplies, the impending economic challenge of the 21st century will be securing enough oil for the two superpowers (PRC and the United States) to remain functioning nations.

Russia:

The data in all sections concerning the nation currently named the Russian Federation primarily deals with the time following the collapse of the superpower Soviet Union. Unfortunately, data from the pre-collapse is unreliable, incomplete, inconsistent, or largely unavailable. The data offered is not to further demonstrate that the Soviet Union has collapsed and is no longer a superpower nation; mere elementary observation is required for one to realize that obvious fact. However, the data helps to demonstrate how quickly a superpower can fall from grace—practically overnight—and become a struggling nation. An inversion of this theory is that a nation can rise to superpower status overnight, however the practical applications of the inverse theory are implausible. While it can be safely stated that the PRC has not risen to superpower status overnight, the nation has risen quickly to that level of attainment.

In 1980, based on data obtained from EconStats, the—then—Soviet Union's GDP of \$602.8 billion was slightly lower than the GDP of the United States in 1963 (\$617.7 billion)⁴. When the Soviet Union collapsed in early 1992, Figure 1.21 shows that Russia underwent a gradual GDP decline resulting from the political chaos,

⁴Obtained from
<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dn/nipaweb/TableView.asp?SelectedTable=5&FirstYear=2003&LastYear=2005&Freq=Qtr>

probable breakdown in basic governmental services, and loss of productivity due to states ceding from the conglomeration of nations formerly assembled beneath the Soviet Union umbrella. However, the gentle-sloping decline seems to have reversed itself in 1999 with a gradual climb. For the first time since the collapse in 1992, Russia exceeded its pre-collapse GDP in 2003. However, this once-superpower is nowhere near capable of mounting an economic challenge to China or the United States. In 2004, the Russian GDP was slightly above the United States GDP of 1973⁵ and the PRC's GDP of 1989⁶.

This proud nation cast a long shadow over the rest of the world for nearly 60 years throughout the cold war. In spite of the historical evidence that Stalin and his Communist brethren slaughtered millions of their own people, if only for the fact that Russia owned mass quantities of nuclear weapon stockpiles, the world had little recourse but to acknowledge the Russian nation as an international superpower. For almost 60 years, the Russian regimes immobilized the world with the fear of a nuclear attack, by either the United States or Russia, and the inevitable nuclear counterattack. Unfortunately, the situation in the motherland was far from favorable or equal for the Russian populace.

The data slowly emerging from the post-collapse ultimately paint an intriguing picture of the Russian economic and political landscape. Little progress seems to have been made as the indicators of industrialization, namely oil consumption outpacing oil production, are severely lacking. Oil consumption and demand barely compares to oil

⁵: Obtained from:

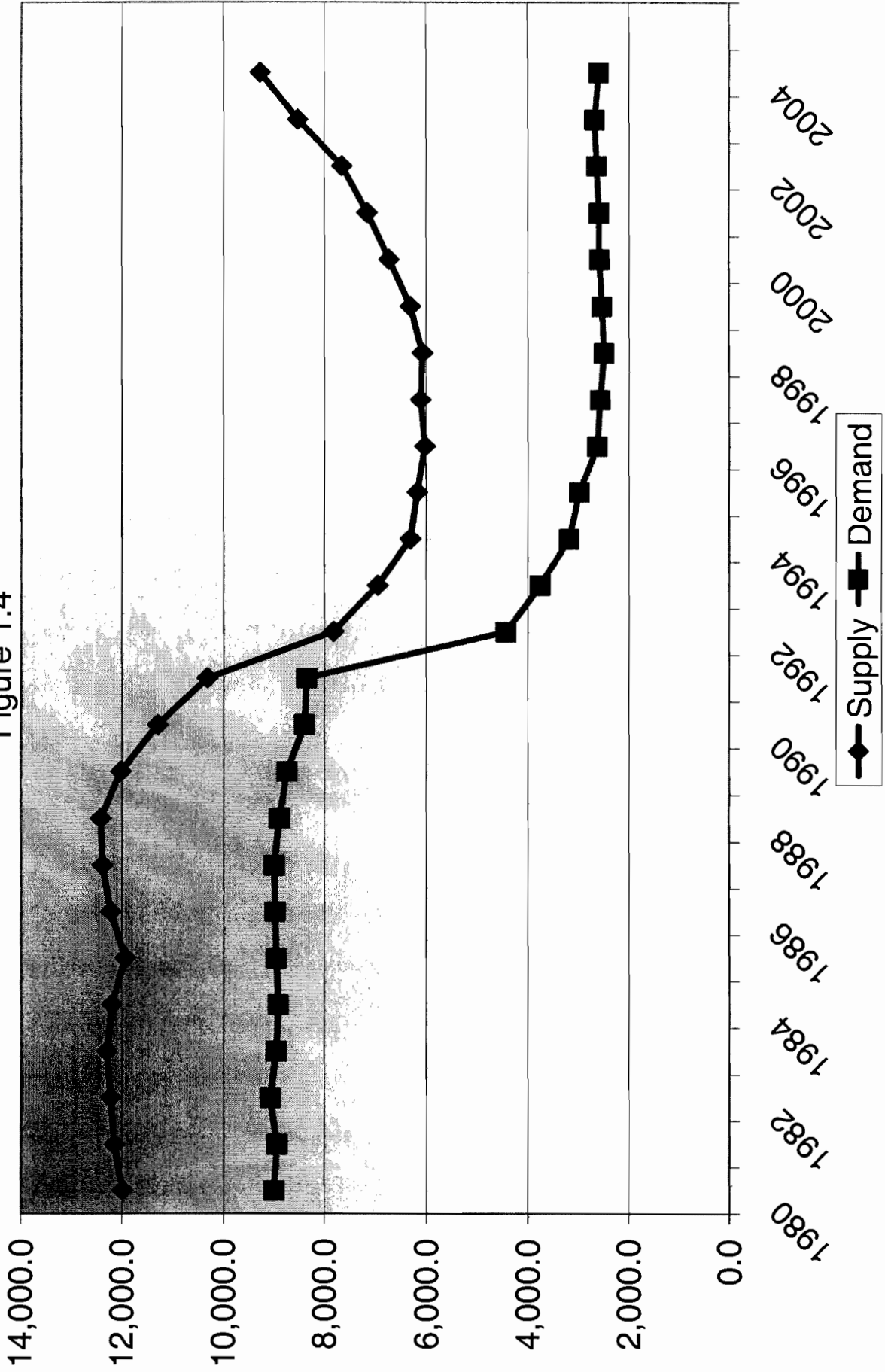
[Http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dn/nipaweb/TableView.asp?SelectedTable=5&FirstYear=2003&LastYear=2005&Freq=Qtr](http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dn/nipaweb/TableView.asp?SelectedTable=5&FirstYear=2003&LastYear=2005&Freq=Qtr)

⁶: Obtained from: <http://www.econstats.com/weo/C035V013.htm>

production. The Russian “superpower” state is in an ideal position for oil use in relation to consumption. Figure 1.4, created with data obtained from the Energy Information Administration, illustrates the dichotomy the former superpower in regards to oil consumption and supply. The 1992 collapse of the Soviet Union, unlike Figure 1.21, is expressed in a steep drop. How can it be that a nation known as a superpower outpaces national oil consumption? This does not fit the Chinese or American models of exponential domesticated resource consumption. If based solely upon the apparent lack of large-scale oil consumption, as shown in Figure 1.4, one may conclude that Russia is no longer a superpower. As argued, oil consumption and production are benchmarks for superpower status. Based on these patterns, the Russian Federation does not fall within the pattern parameters. While their oil production is high, and rising—an indicator of superpower status—their oil consumption is holding stable and, barring any exceptional chain of events, not in any danger of nearing their pre-collapse usage in the near future

The Russian page of the EIA website explains that “...in 2003, Russia was the world’s second largest producer of crude oil, behind only Saudi Arabia. From March to May 2004, Russian crude oil output actually exceeded that of Saudi Arabia” (§ 7). One could argue that, as witnessed by the attempted monopoly administered under the umbrella of “economic freedom” orchestrated by the United States in Shuja’s 2005 article, Russia will become one of three major oil battlefields in the 21st century. With troop deployments to the Middle East, and Africa, only a matter of time exists before Russia’s backyard will be invaded, willed for oil, and possibly declared as a protectorate of a foreign nation.

Russian Oil Consumption/Supply (thousands of barrels per day)
Figure 1.4



Data does not support the conjecture that the Russian economic role will be more than a monetary broker in the power play between the superpowers of China and the United States. Based on trend data presented in Figure 1.4, consumption does not appear to be rising to match or exceed national production. Ergo, Russia has no economic drive to increase military rosters in order to secure new oil stocks or protect supply lines stretching from the far corners of the world. Instead, with China and the United States clamoring at Russia's doorstep, it only needs to charge a hefty admission fee to both countries, and slowly rebuild the intimidating reputation afforded any superpower.

Barring any worldwide economic disaster, Russia poses no economic danger to any nation. The Russian economy, as indicated by Figure 1.21, is lethargic at best. Once the Soviet states splintered off, and took localized production and industry with them, the entity now known as the Russian Federation, which was already economically anemic from the Communist regime, quickly entered an economic freefall.

Economic conclusion:

Expanding worldwide demand of a finite resource means, as has begun already, that governments will eventually run out of room in the political or geographic buffer zones they idealistically enjoy. Governments of all ideologies must work together in order to ensure mutual continuance of the worldwide economy, else our landscape, political or otherwise, will become littered with casualties from a war of resources, greed, and overall inability to share. Historically, governments have merely sliced

away at the global resources pie until enough had been gathered to provide for the inherent constituent demands of any nation. Unfortunately, long gone is the time in which governments can blindly steal from one another and blatantly ignore the consequences. Now the world is in the midst of an age in which the kindergarten concept of sharing must prevail. Until an all-powering renewable energy source is discovered, the world is responsible for collectively depleting the natural resources at our disposal. Can the world, in good conscious, invade and slaughter other nations merely on the philosophy that nation A needs oil more urgently than nation B does? What, outside of national ego, is stopping the larger nations such as China, the United States, and Russia from sitting down and ironing out a plan to extend the world's supply of rapidly depleting supplies of natural resources? Regardless whether the nations of the world, or even a tiny coalition, sit down and discuss plans, one concept is an unmitigated certainty. Without a reliable alternative energy source, the world is locked onto a collision course with disasters of biblical proportions when the resources finally fail to flow and mineral veins yield nothing but rock and dirt.

Based upon the presumption that GDP and oil consumption in conjunction with production is an accurate barometer of a nation's "worthiness" of superpower status or regard, the PRC far outpaces the once acknowledged superpower of the former Soviet Union. Additionally, the PRC is on par with the United States in terms of single country, not an aggregate figure such as the European Union, GDP and oil consumption compared to domestic oil production. If Chang's theory is true, the "tipping point" (Thacker, ¶ 5), or catalyst, for the destruction of the PRC will emerge sometime before the year 2011. Economically, Chang's point is foolish at best. Short

of the PRC suffering a sudden, massive, and comprehensive negative economic event that surpasses the scope of the former Soviet Union's collapse, no real evidence to support Chang's tipping point theory. Furthermore, as demonstrated in Figure 1.4, the economy of the Soviet Union—as represented by oil consumption—and GDP (Figure 1.21) was lethargic at best prior to its economic implosion. The PRC figures illustrate a robust economy with almost no possibility of coming to a screeching halt anytime soon. Economically, Russia's star has fallen from the lonely international superpower sky. However, Russia's diminishment only provides a slot for the brightening star of the PRC to shine.

Politics:

Regardless of one's stance on the almost limitless political spectrum, any individual is innately aware of political forces guiding the overarching stability of society. Regardless of the amount of public cynicism accompanying the candidacy announcement, or announcement of an overthrow of the government, politics is explicitly important, if somewhat removed, in the lives of every citizen of Earth. Whether countries operate from a downward power distribution model or a grassroots power model can be subject to contentious debate depending on the country involved, the individual debating, and, in some countries, which faction leader controls the military that particular week. For a common understanding, I will concede that national governance structures can range from oppressive totalitarian to liberal democratic. However, barring an exceptional grassroots involvement, the power

distribution discussed in this section will be regulated to the upper echelons of government and largely, if not exclusively, downward distributed.

This section will focus on the political landscape of the PRC in order to demonstrate further that it is a superpower. The PRC section will contain an analysis of how much the PRC has changed, politically, over the past 70 years. The multitude of political changes, and experiments, endured by the PRC in the immediate past are an important aspect of the current regime. The mentality for change engendered in the current generation of PRC leaders is deeply rooted in the past. Political stability is an important factor for any nation, superpower or otherwise, and it should be noted that successful nations, superpowers in particular, are largely stable in the realm of politics. For example, none of the nations presented here could be considered a superpower if conditions existed for a civil war to erupt every other week. The United States and Russian political arenas are shown for the sake of continuity and comparison of the political culture contained within the borders of each nation. Both of these nations demonstrate the political diversity possible in a superpower state.

China:

Superpowers are formed from varying starting points. The history of a nation, the strength of the ruling party, the methodology in which laws are passed and codified, and the very nature of foreign relations with individual countries all serve to determine whether a country will survive and thrive or quickly falter. The PRC's tumultuous political history over the past century seems to have been tempered with a lengthy—and currently standing—period of stability. The possibility of civil war is

remote, and indicative of a stable political climate. Regardless of the starting point on a nation's journey to superpower status, the unique implementation and combination of the political factors listed above are the determining factor of superpower status.

Because of the way the PRC has thrived, due to their approach of these factors, I argue that the PRC is a political superpower.

In order to establish the motivation for the current philosophy of the Chinese government, one must first understand the past practices of the nation. In the past century, the populace of the PRC has endured many government-sponsored programs. The Library of Congress report on the PRC states, "It [PRC] also embarked on a political rectification movement against "enemies of the state" and "class struggle" under the aegis of agrarian reform as part of the "transition to socialism" (LOC, 5). In the form of "Five-year" plans, China's aims were holistic in their efforts. After the death of the PRC Communist icon, Mao Zedong, the Communist party returned from the extremist abyss it had mired in during Mao's lifetime. With social experiments rivaling the experiments of the Nazis, "...anti-intellectual (such as the Hundred Flowers Campaign, 1957), economic (the Great Leap Forward, 1958-59), and political (the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-76)..." LOC, (5), Mao exposed the Chinese populace to conditions exponentially harsher than those that existed prior to his ascension to PRC political power. These social experiments, while horrific, help to explain the current mentality of the Chinese government.

Circa 1978, "The Four Modernizations (agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense) became preeminent forces within the party, state, and society" (LOC, 6). Although the attempt by the PRC to raise achievement in four areas

was impressive, it was an outright and dangerous gamble with a fragile nation recovering from the experiments of only a few years prior. Fortunately for the people and politicians of China, the gamble landed in favor of the PRC. “The well-being of China’s people increased substantially...” (6). While the four modernizations were expansive in their aims, and produced a breadth of improvements across a vast spectrum, not all areas of Chinese life were affected by these state-sponsored improvements.

“...the so-called ‘fifth modernization’—politics—occurred at too slow a pace for the emerging generation” (6). The populace of China, at this epoch in time, was afforded an immensely different perspective and outlook based solely upon their age. Any individuals 39 or older would remember the communist rise to power in 1949 (6) and would ostensibly remember the disastrous social experiments of the Mao period. Those alive long enough to remember the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 and 1938 (6) would find themselves faced with at least three governments during their lifetime. Even if, in 1978, no Chinese citizens possessed first-hand knowledge of the Guomindang and CCP faction fights between 1925 and 1927 (6), one may conclude that the Chinese political landscape was highly fractionalized. After three distinct types of government within 60 years, including some which slaughtered any anti-state sentiment, political fear among the citizenry ran, albeit silently, very deep. At the higher levels of political office, dissent was tolerated to an even lesser extent. This fear created an environment akin to George Orwell’s novel 1984 with an exceptionally oppressive totalitarian regime in which any suspected traces of anti-state sentiment—

however minute—were countered with swift slaughter even though “...pro-reform leaders were placed in positions of authority” (6).

Perhaps the greatest, publicly recorded, stance against the PRC Communist regime was what became known as the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre where the military “...violently suppressed...”(6) protesters supporting a pro-democracy movement in China. These protesters, even though many governmental officials may have shared their views, were slaughtered in order for the Communists to retain their power. Sadly, in spite of “...the rising generation of technocrats [who] ruled China and oversaw its modernization...” (6), according to the Human Rights Watch website, “Fifteen years later, the government still forbids any public commemoration of the event. Police harass and detain those dedicated to securing rehabilitation of victims, payment of compensation...” (Hrw.org, China page, ¶ 4). As unfortunate as this event may seem, one must remember that all superpowers have had periods of extreme oppression in their pasts. From Lenin and Stalin slaughtering millions of their constituency to the Japanese internment camps, courtesy of President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 1066, the United States and Russia have both removed “troublesome” parts of their citizenry whenever the ruling class feared that riotous dissent or coup was probable among the individuals or groups.

However horrific the overt displays of government-sponsored genocide, the CIA’s World Factbook maintains, “...living standards have improved dramatically and the room for personal choice has expanded, yet political controls remain tight” (¶ 1). This statement, directly from the United States Central Intelligence Agency, demonstrates that individual liberties are becoming prevalent in spite of the political

hegemony. While the individual liberties may be increasing at a slower rate than the world may wish, one must realize that the PRC is in an unusual position. After decades of oppressively harsh political controls, the government cannot simply “open the floodgates” of personal freedom without fearing a result possibly necessitating the use of martial law. Assume, for a moment, that the concept of freedom was a house of cards and individual liberties such as speech or assembly were the cards themselves. For the sake of stability, the government must systematically and strategically allow freedom to flourish. If the cards are placed incorrectly, or haphazardly, the house will crumble. If “the house” were to crumble, the practical applications would equate a result similar to Chang’s vision.

With a population of 1.3 billion individuals (CIA, ¶ 20) reform can happen neither swiftly or in too many areas at once. The PRC government must be extraordinarily cautious in how reforms or changes are implemented. While the massive population is a boost for economics, the population equals a nightmare for political leaders. A true democracy, in literal practice, would be an almost statistical improbable undertaking.

China’s political system is one of surprising strength in spite of the abundantly tiered hierarchy. In an essay entitled, “How a bill becomes a law in China: Stages and processes of lawmaking,” Murray Scot Tanner stated in 1995, “Instead, it [the bill-to-law process] is better thought of as a ‘multi-stage, multi-arena’ process. Each law moves through approximately five stages...As a law progresses through these stages, it moves along China’s three major ‘arenas’ of lawmaking institutions...”(39). Tanner states that the major arenas are “...the State Council, the Communist Party Central

Apparatus, and the National People's Congress (NPC) and its Standing Committee..." (39). Tanner also notes that the Supreme People's Court (SPC) is attempting to practice a concept akin to judicial activism; however, his power distribution model (42) does not list the SPC. Lack of SPC listing on the distribution model seems to signal influence similar to a NGO, such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent, attempting to manipulate international relations.

Tanner argues "...each stage is characterized by its own typical set of political actors (individual and organizational)...which can affect the content of policy during that stage" (40). While political actors are present and influential in nearly any non-totalitarian regime, Tanner somehow neglects to mention that almost all intra-China actors are state sponsored. For political parties and leaders, The CIA Factbook clearly states, "Chinese Communist Party or CCP [*H[u] Jintao, General Secretary of the Central Committee*]; eight registered small parties under control of the CCP" (§ 50). It further states, "[N]o substantial political opposition groups exist, although the government has identified the Falungong spiritual movement and the China Democracy Party as subversive groups" (§ 51). The Factbook defines the Legislative Branch as a "unicameral" body that appoints the judges on the Supreme People's Court (§ 48, 49). If all parties must be registered in order to have a voice in the political process, and all parties are controlled by the CCP, one cannot help but assume that the CCP has a profound impact on any measures introduced in the NPC. While the "rubber stamp" mentality may be a deleterious pedagogy for governing, the method does have the benefit of keeping a singular direction and vision in governmental operations and population management.

While democracy seems to be slowly blooming in the PRC with elections, little democracy exists beyond a façade. According to Charles Hauss' textbook

Comparative Politics: Domestic Responses to Global Challenges

...average citizens actually participate in political life more than their counterparts in the West. However, little of that involvement has an effect in shaping public policy. Rather some...call it “mobilized” participation because the CCP determines what people should do and then turns them out to meet the regime's goals (Hauss, 306).

The CIA Factbook notes that “...[NPC] members elected by municipal, regional, and provincial people's congresses to serve five-year terms...” (CIA, ¶ 48). This effectively turns a body of 2,985 (CIA, ¶ 48) into little more than a figurehead body with minimal powers, a paycheck, and a constituency. Hauss agrees with this assessment, “...the [National People's] [C]ongress meets infrequently and serves primarily as a rubber stamp for decisions made elsewhere” (Hauss, 310). One must note that even though faction fights may occur between ministers and deputies throughout the country, having a political apparatus constructed with only one electoral choice focuses all but the most explosive faction fights on discovering the “best” route for the state. Hauss also notes, “It [the CCP] is also based on democratic centralism, which theoretically means that internal disagreement are kept to a minimum if they are allowed to exist at all” (Hauss, 298). From Hauss' statement, one might surmise that it is safer to silence one's opinion and blindly vote and accept whatever directives are transmitted from the CCP; this blind obedience to the state is indicative of the possibility of political coup within the PRC's organizational structure.

Due to the singular mentality of mollify or remain silent, the CCP is in little danger of political coup. While, granted, members may exist with “extremist” points

of view, or views skewed towards “westernization” or global conquest similar to the path America now walks, one cannot possibly fathom all-out dissention from any combination of the legislative, executive, or judicial branches. Perhaps due to the Communist regime, the extermination of mass quantities of public dissention through the social experiments of the mid-20th century, or for largely unknown reasons, little external dissension seems to escape Beijing.

Nearly three thousand individuals within the NPC, all focused on improvement of “the state,” allows for a group mentality similar to a collective conscious. Whether through conditioning or fear, these individuals have been “trained” to pursue the best route as the PRC charts a course through the new millennium and into the history books as a rising regional and global power. Despite any cognitive reformation for CCP sycophants, with almost three thousand “elected” officials, an immense bureaucracy must be installed and maintained in order to maintain some semblance of order; in turn, this has the effect of creating the “multi-stage, multi-arena” (Tanner, 39) reality.

Chinese bureaucracy does not halt itself at the national borders or the water’s edge. In Roy’s article, he constructs a zero-sum scenario where, “...a major power with a relatively high growth rate is projected to overtake the slower-growing...power. Political tensions...rise as the threatened dominant power fears it will lose its control over the international system...” (165). Chinese external growth is the byproduct of having nearly three thousand elected (CIA, ¶ 48) officials largely focused upon China’s rising place in the world. While their externally oriented stance is hardly a new

concept, one could argue that time has combined the purview of internal bureaucracy with the mentality of an increasingly interdependent, and interconnected, world.

In 1979, the Chinese government had already begun to extend a sphere of economic and political influence with countries worldwide. According to Princeton University International Relations professor Henry Bienen, “Numerous [African] states are now evolving conceptions of their own national interests... These national interests of African states are evolving at a time when... important new actors like... China... have formed economic and military relationships with Africa” (446). China’s partnership with African countries has continued, and apparently flourished, through 2005. An article by Gabriel Packard in the *New York Amsterdam News* reports that, “China imports a large volume of raw materials, especially oil, from Africa and has written off millions of dollars of national debt to several African countries and has offered aid to others” (¶ 3).

Apparently, Africa has become an important political asset for the Chinese. In an era where nations are exceptionally loath to adjust or eliminate foreign debt, the Chinese seem quite willing to toss out aid packages to oil producing countries. In this instance, the Chinese government concretely solves the hypothesis about whether capital is more important than mud. Shuja’s article, in addition to expressing how the PRC has diversified many economic assets, also states how the political side is equally diversified. Shuja compiles a modest list of nations that China has become politically friendly with for many reasons. “Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan... Contracts worth billions of dollars have been signed with these

newly-independent Central Asian states...China has also consolidated its relations with Mongolia...China and Iran enjoy exemplary friendly ties..."(145,145,146, 148).

In a time where some nations throughout the globe have recently inherited new leadership, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Monaco⁷, Vatican City, and Canada⁸, the PRC is compiling an extensive list of worldwide friends and allies through business practices and, as noted by Packard, debt reduction plans and write-offs to other nations. In a 2005 report prepared by the Department of Defense (DOD) for the United States Congress, the report claims "Of note, some of China's major recipients of military assistance – Burma, Sudan, and Zimbabwe – all are subject to EU arms embargoes" (DOD, 25). The friends and diplomatic relations that the PRC is currently securing will place the entire nation in a better place, in the international public relations arena at the very least, than had it merely invaded each country and acquired natural resources through force. In this case, the results of the pen stroke of diplomacy are far more effective and desirable than a sword strike, or nuclear sortie, tipped in promises, blood, and oil.

The PRC has apparently developed the Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan (Shuja, 145,145,146, 148), and African political arenas. While some, presumably the former Soviet states and African contacts, are a direct response to the United States petro-diplomatic moves, other nations such as Mongolia are simply part of the expanding political buffer zone the PRC is attempting to employ while it acquires resources.

⁷ <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10108054/>

⁸ <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/americas/11/28/canada.government/index.html>

Regardless of the stance taken by the PRC on foreign relations, one can presume that their newly acquired foreign influence is an important step in international relations and securing the PRC place in the international arena. By reducing the debt of nation A, and in turn purchasing goods such as oil and weapons to bolster the local economy of nation A, the PRC is earning both influence and goods in a single stroke. Nations, especially those racked with economic strife, are eager to align themselves with the bidder who, foremost, has a stable currency, and bids the highest. The breadth and depth of Chinese political contacts indicate a worldwide movement to align towards China. If trends continue, barring an extreme change of fortune for the PRC or the United States, the world may soon be greeted with another cold war.

Especially interesting is the PRC's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Of the other nations, France, the Russian Federation, the United States, and Great Britain, only two have been regulated as superpower nations in the past. France and Great Britain, generally stalwart proponents of American interests, have neither the means nor, currently, the expansionist tendencies, to propel them into consideration for superpower status. Consider, for a moment, the supposition that the PRC is only an international powerhouse by sheer virtue of having a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. If the PRC is not an international force, why was it restored to full member status in both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council in 1971 by General Assembly resolution 2751?⁹ Instead of having its membership revoked, the PRC regained voting status in both the General Assembly and its much-coveted, permanent, seat in the Security Council.

⁹ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/26/ares26.htm>

Even though China's legislative bureaucracy may be little more than a rubber stamp for the directives from the CCP, one can take comfort in knowing that directives are, theoretically, quick to implement with minimal discussion. This focused stance on policy allows change to occur much quicker than in either the United States or the Russian Federation where ad nauseum debate and voting must occur before an idea can even begin to be considered for implementation. A honed, tightly focused domestic bureaucracy coupled with a non-expiring ultimate veto on the international stage allows the PRC to sit at the apex of both domestic and international political power.

United States:

America is a political superpower; this fact cannot be logically denied. However, in order to offer a proper comparison to the PRC, an analysis and general overview of the American political landscape must be conducted. This section will discuss the American political makeup, the aims of the United States, the oil-driven mindset of politicians, and the near-sightedness of such mindsets.

At the beginning of the 20th century, America seemed to be little more than a war-torn country with xenophobic tendencies towards anyone not of Anglo-Saxon heritage. The political system lost enormous amounts of credibility through constant scandals, corruption, rampant gerrymandering, pork barrel projects, and enlisted a membership comprised of wholly ethnocentric, if not outright xenophobic, individuals. Comparing the political beginning of the 20th century to the political beginning of the 21st century, one may discover that America has changed little in the course of 100 years. While some politicians may have lost the original aim of their profession—to serve their constituency—the political process remains the same at all levels.

The American political process is strictly single-member districts with “first past the post” voting requirements. For all levels of elections, a simple majority is the requisite for membership in the political arena. While the American electorate is not nearly as numerous as the Chinese model, that fact provides miniscule comfort to someone lost in the shuffle of the American bureaucracy. Americans have 535 members of Congress, a summation of 100 Senators and 435 members in the House of Representatives, 50 governors, 1 chief executive, and an almost incalculable number of state and local government officials.

William Nordhaus begins his article, “Alternative approaches to the political business cycle” with a highly appropriate quote about the American chief executive:

It is impossible to consider the ordinary course of affairs in the United States without perceiving that the desire to be reelected is the chief aim of the President...and that especially as [the election] approaches, his personal interest takes the place of his interest in the public good. ~Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

From scandal to highly publicized scandal, Nordhaus argues that American politics merely follows a predictable roller coaster pattern and, depending on whether a party is “opportunistic” (3) or “ideological” (3) in their aims, individuals can track and anticipate the rise and fall of political parties if a set of regimentally defined variables is known. “...voters respond to external shocks much as they do to induced shocks...the impact of external shocks on party popularity appears not to depend on the party in power;...”(5). Nordhaus seems to argue that American-style politics truly lacks the constituent-assistance guise that many parties campaign under, and that parties only need to give the impression of following a set of variables in order to win an election. In American politics, unfortunately, compassion remains at the county

clerk's office with the registration fee. While domestic politics may be a game to some or all parties, the focus of American politics is hesitantly turning beyond the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The United States, much like China, is guilty of diversifying national assets through the African continent. The United States' position and interest in Africa is an important factor in demonstrating Chinese superpower status. In 1979, as defined by Bienen, the picture in Africa was largely opaque "...[In Africa] the United States faced many countries which it knew [sic] little about and where, it was felt, the United States had few interests. Assumptions were made that African countries were not and could not become consequential" (449). In 2005, Africa has become a major factor in diplomatic relations. An article in the *Middle East*, eloquently states, "Given the [United States'] quest for alternative sources of energy outside the politically explosive Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa is now firmly in the [Bush] administration's sights" (29). Africa, ignored by so many nations for so long, is quickly assuming a position squarely in the middle of an international tug of war for coveted finite resources. A mere 30 years ago, Africa was barely a blip on the mental radar screen of a junior diplomat at the State department. Now, as the PRC demonstrates interest in African nations, the United States is quick to introduce itself into the area. Further emphasizing this point is Robert Kaplan's statement in *The Atlantic Monthly*, "Big Oil, too, has lured the United States to the region: America already imports some 15 percent of its oil from West Africa—a figure expected to rise to 25 percent within a decade. Also of concern are the Chinese, who have been investing heavily in the region and whose influence the United States wants to limit" (91). If Laos or Panama showed an

interest, beyond a humanitarian, in African nations would the United States be as quick to increase their presence? Is the United States' posturing in Africa a strategic move to block a perceived threat from the Chinese, or is it merely a coincidence that the two most prosperous nations in the world are attempting to play in the same continental sandbox at the same time?

Apparently, oil drives the political forces of the United States more than the average American ever realizes. Americans are, as illustrated by Figure 1.31, increasingly dependent upon oil. Upon the slightest hint of instability in the oil market, the American populace immediately reevaluates any oil-based decisions. Unfortunately, any reevaluation only lasts as long as the price surge or market instability. As soon as the prices recede to their pre-instability levels, Americans return to their slothful oil usage. By realizing that American oil consumption is almost a given in any equation, one should not be surprised that American citizens have yet to make the transition to cleaner energy sources. At a national level of politics, elected officials are far too concerned with maintaining America's quality of life instead of elevating the quality of life around the world. Politicians are engaging in various monopolies under the guise of enabling free market competition and broad control. One can safely argue that the efforts of the United States have turned American politicians into the oil barons of the 18th and 19th century or forced them to resemble the monopoly of Bell telephone systems of the mid 20th century.

While American governmental initiatives have fewer apparatus' to hurdle than their Chinese counterparts, because of the lack of centralized party structure, initiatives often lack cohesiveness and appear as one political party's attempt at "stealing" the

national spotlight or media cycle from their opposite party. With so much distrust, hatred, and political xenophobia between parties, one cannot help but express sheer amazement that any political initiatives are ever enacted. Because of the hateful political atmosphere in Washington D.C., the spirit of compromise exists as a byproduct, if not a necessary component to keep the American democracy running, of an incalculable amount of competition and localized political misanthropy. Whether ideas are deliberately given high goals to survive the compromising process, usually performed through a joint conference committee between the House and the Senate, politicians rarely succeed by unilaterally proceeding through the political process. Much like the recent international relations of America, many organizations and individuals frown upon domestic political unilateralism and “show off” actors in politics.

In spite of the inherent suspicion, and political xenophobia, the American government is conducive to progress insofar as domestic matters are concerned. When international matters are introduced that do not immediately affect the American populace, molasses exudes from the D.C. political epicenter as politicians drag their feet. The unstated motto of “if it doesn’t help our citizenry, here and now, why should we bother with it?” seems to be floating through the halls and corridors of Capitol Hill. This mantra of isolationist tendencies only serves to harm America’s long-range standing in the world. By aiming for short-term goals, we are negligently sacrificing future business and political opportunities. One could argue that, after World War II, the United States had political capital and credibility to expend. However, after

Vietnam and Iraq, one could argue that America has not only expended the built up capital, but it is severely “in the red” and used up whatever credibility it possessed.

Now is not the time for alienation of long-time allies. To borrow a currently popular political phrase, now is the time for coalition building. However, the coalitions of the willing must be comprised of nations genuinely interested in assisting building a better world, the coalition should not be comprised of nations America has coerced using strong-arm tactics. One could argue that Dalpino’s testimony, in which she declares the United States as the only “As the world's only global superpower...” (Dalpino testimony, security ¶ 9), is inherently false. On 4 November 2004, President G. W. Bush held a press conference in which he stated, “I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it” (Whitehouse.gov, ¶ 65). However, in a May 2005 article entitled “Bush’s Political Capital Spent, Voices in Both Parties Suggest”, the *Washington Post* boldly declared, “...[President Bush’s political capital] bank account has been significantly drained” (¶ . 1). This assertion resonated for the rest of the year and reached summation in a CBS December column written by correspondent John Roberts entitled “2005: George Bush’s trying year” through the statement, “By year’s end...that vaunted political capital was all but exhausted...” (¶ 1). In this sense, the United States is quickly losing standing in the international community. A global superpower should not be alienating allies and enemies alike. While the PRC is gaining friends and new contacts, such as Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan (Shuja, 145,145,146, 148), the United States is only gaining international animosity due to the frivolous squandering of political capital. While the United States possesses the same “ultimate”