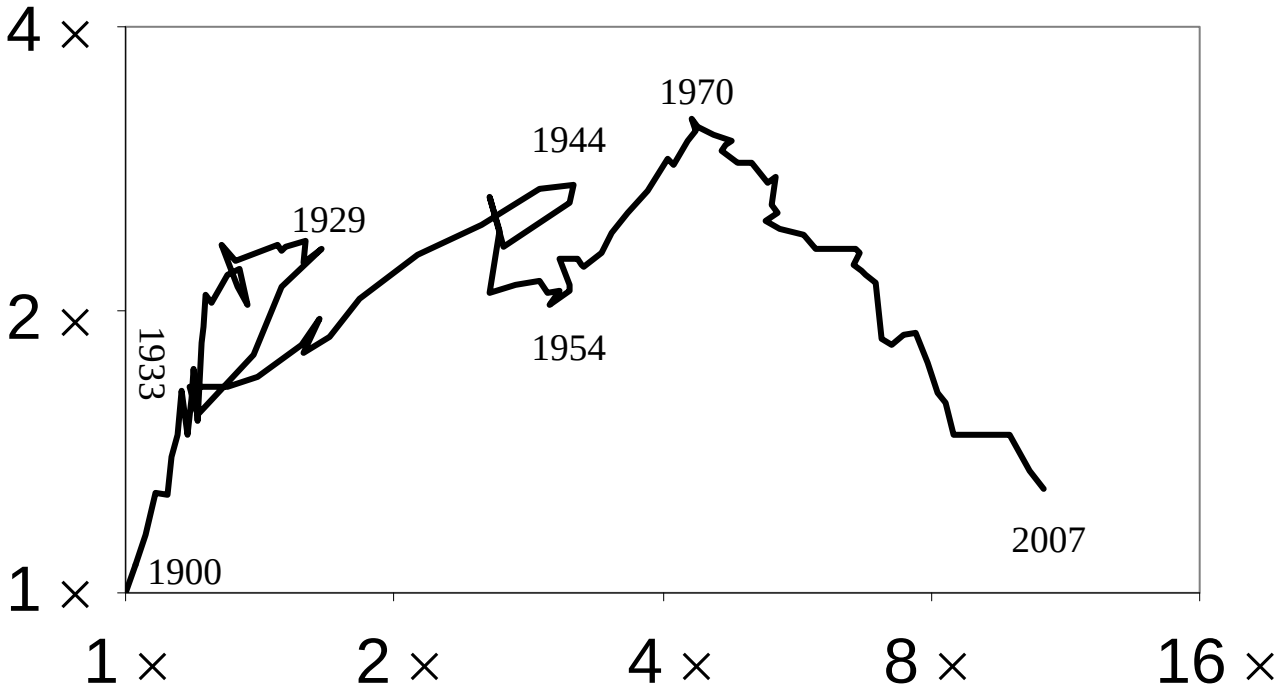
Fig. 1: Environmental Kuznets Curve for USA sulfur dioxide emissions

In a century-long course, sulfur dioxide emissions, mainly from burning coal, rose and fell as affluence increased in a so-called Environmental Kuznets Curve in which rich is first dirtier and then cleaner.



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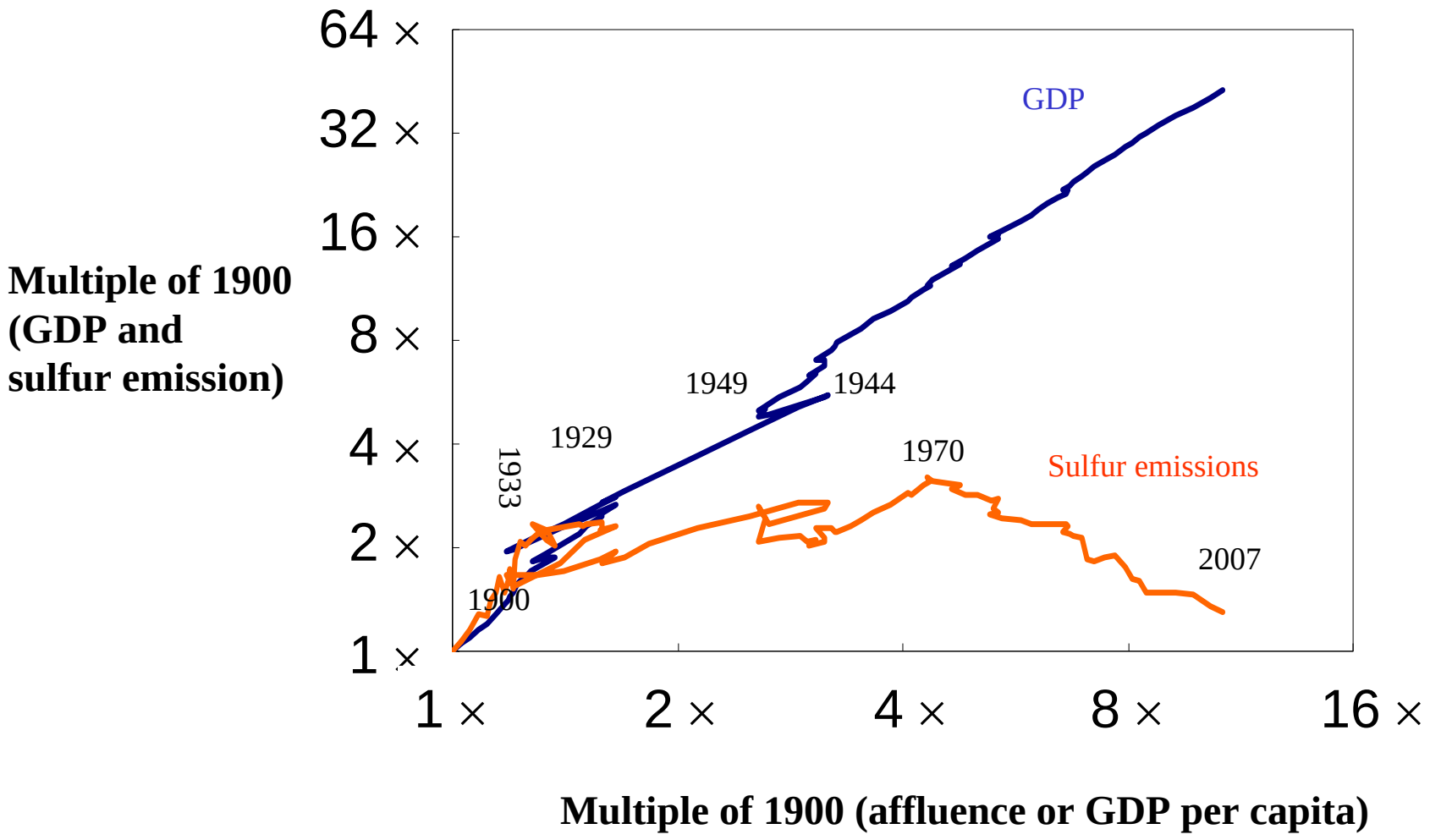
Sources of data: CDIAC, EIA, US EPA April 2009

Fig. 2: Decoupling of USA economic growth & sulfur dioxide emissions

The orange Environmental Kuznets Curve of sulfur emissions (black line in Fig. 1), which peaked in 1970, contrasts with the blue straight line of growth of GDP. Economics slumps in 1929 & 1944 reverse growth for 5-10 years but do not affect the longer term trends for GDP or emissions.



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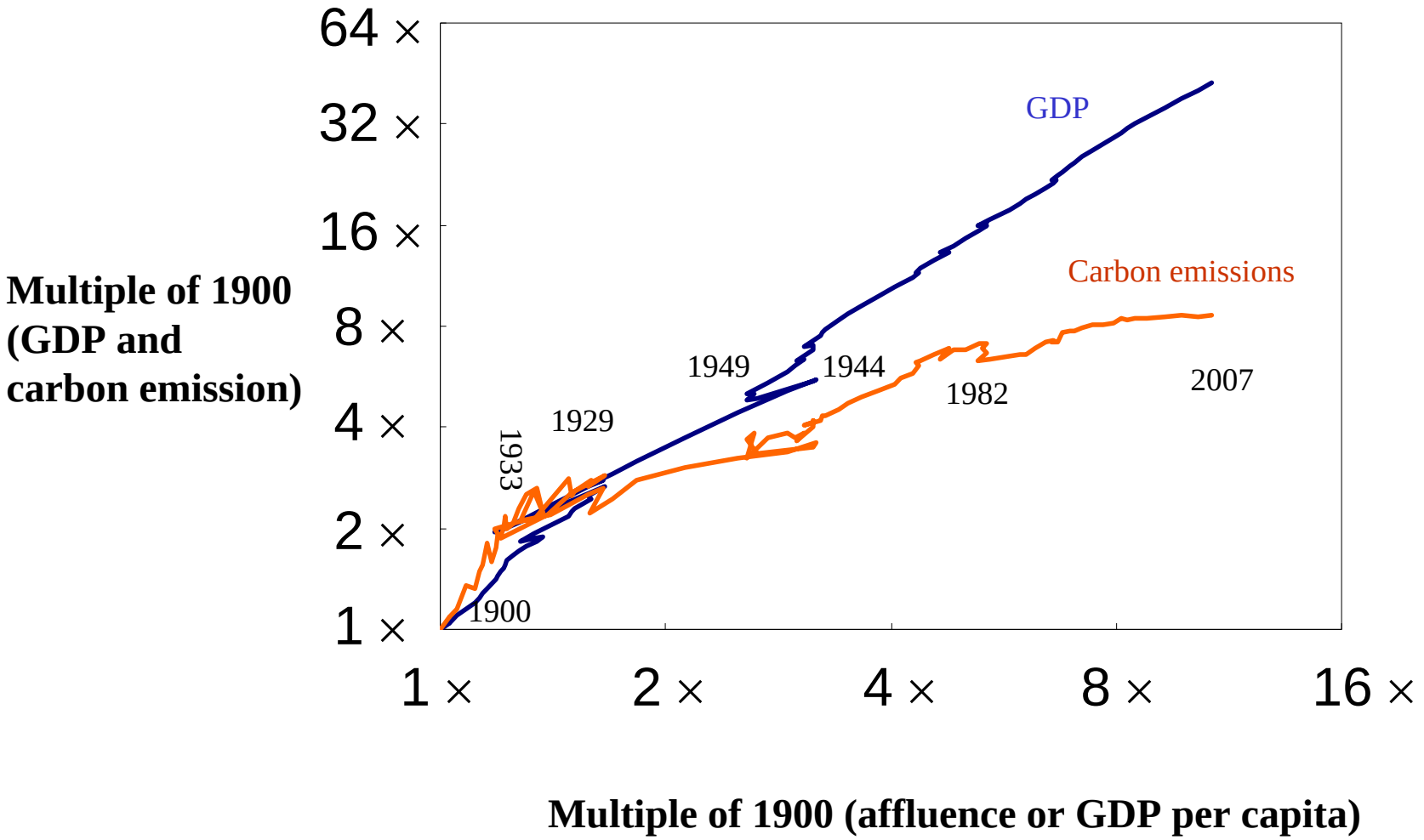
Source of data: EPA Sept 2009

Fig. 3: Decoupling of USA economic growth & carbon dioxide emissions

Carbon emissions seem around their peak, especially by analogy with sulfur emissions



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Sources of data: CDIAC, EIA

April 2009