



## Abstract

The historical simulations of sea ice during 1979 to 2005 by the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 5 (CMIP5) are compared with satellite observations and Global Ice–Ocean Modeling and Assimilation System (GIOMAS) data in this study.

Forty-nine models, almost all of the CMIP5 climate models and Earth System Models, are used. For the Antarctic, multi-model ensemble mean (MME) results can give good climatology of sea ice extent (SIE), but the linear trend is incorrect. The linear trend of satellite-observed Antarctic SIE is  $1.56 \times 10^5 \text{ km}^2 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ; only 1/7 CMIP5 models show increasing trends, and the linear trend of CMIP5 MME is negative ( $-3.36 \times 10^5 \text{ km}^2 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ). For the Arctic, both climatology and linear trend are better reproduced. Sea ice volume (SIV) is also evaluated in this study, and this is a first attempt to evaluate the SIV in all CMIP5 models. Compared with the GIOMAS data, the SIV values in both Antarctic and Arctic are too small, especially in spring and winter. The GIOMAS SIV in September is  $16.7 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , while the corresponding Antarctic SIV of CMIP5 MME is  $13.0 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , almost 22 % less. The Arctic SIV of CMIP5 in April is  $26.8 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , which is also less than the GIOMAS SIV ( $29.3 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ ). This means that the sea ice thickness simulated in CMIP5 is too thin although the SIE is fairly well simulated.

## 1 Introduction

The Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 5 (CMIP5) provides a very useful platform for studying climate change. Simulations and projections by more than 60 state-of-the-art climate models and Earth System Models are archived under CMIP5. Assessment of the performance of CMIP5 outputs is necessary for scientists to decide which model outputs to use in their research and for model-developers to improve their models. Here, we focus on the assessment of sea ice simulations under CMIP5 historical experiment. The CMIP5 data portal contains sea ice outputs from 49 coupled

TCD

8, 3413–3435, 2014

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



models. Many of these CMIP5 sea ice simulations have been evaluated and several valuable studies have been published.

For the Antarctic, the main problem of the CMIP5 models is their inability to reproduce the observed slight increase of sea ice extent (SIE). Turner et al. (2013) first assessed CMIP5 Antarctic SIE simulations using 18 models, and summarized that the majority of these models have too little SIE at the minimum sea ice period of February, and the mean of these 18 models' SIE shows a decreasing trend over 1979–2005, opposite to the satellite observation that exhibits a slight increasing trend. Polvani et al. (2013) used four CMIP5 models to study the cause of observed Antarctic SIE increasing trend under the conditions of increasing greenhouse gases and stratospheric ozone depletion. They concluded that it is difficult to attribute the observed trend in total Antarctic sea ice to anthropogenic forcing. Using simulations from 25 CMIP5 models, Mahlstein et al. (2013) pointed that internal sea ice variability is large in the Antarctic region and that both the observed and simulated trends may represent natural variation along with external forcing.

For the Arctic, CMIP5 models offer much better simulations. Stroeve et al. (2012) evaluated CMIP5 Arctic SIE trends using 20 CMIP5 models. They found that the seasonal cycle of SIE was well represented, and that the simulated SIE decreasing trend was more consistent with the observations over the satellite era than that of CMIP3 models but still smaller than the observed. They also noted the spread in projected SIE through the 21st century from CMIP5 models is similar to that from CMIP3 models. Liu et al. (2013) pointed out that CMIP5 projections have large inter-model spread, but they also found that they could reproduce observed Arctic ice-free time by reducing the large spread using two different approaches with 30 CMIP5 models.

These studies only used some of CMIP5 models' outputs because other CMIP5 model outputs were not yet submitted. By now, all the CMIP5 participants have finished their model runs and submitted their model outputs. So, here we will evaluate all CMIP5 sea ice simulations, in an attempt to provide the community a useful reference.

TCO

8, 3413–3435, 2014

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents sea ice data and analysis methodology used in this study. Model assessment is given in Sect. 3. Conclusions and discussion are provided in Sect. 4.

## 2 Data and methodology

5 Sea ice simulations of CMIP5 historical runs from 49 CMIP5 coupled models are now available. Monthly sea ice concentration (SIC) and sea ice thickness from these models are used in this study. These outputs are published by the Earth System Grid Federation (ESGF) (<http://pcmdi9.llnl.gov/esgf-web-fe/>) by each institute that is responsible for its model. Although there are several ensemble realizations of each CMIP5 model, 10 the standard deviation between different ensemble realizations of each model is small (Turner et al., 2013; Table 1). So, here we only choose the first realization of each model for the analysis. CMIP5 historical runs cover the period from 1850 to 2005, but the continuous sea ice satellite record only started in 1979; so the period of 1979–2005 is chosen for the following analysis. Monthly satellite-observed SIC is used in this 15 study, which is based on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) team algorithm (Cavalieri et al., 1996) provided by the National Snow and Ice Data Centre (NSIDC) (<http://nsidc.org/data/seaice/>). Sea ice volume (SIV) is an important index for assessment of sea ice simulation although direct observations of SIV are very limited. SIV used here is from the Global Ice–Ocean Modeling and Assimilation System (GIOMAS) ([http://psc.apl.washington.edu/zhang/Global\\_seaice/index.html](http://psc.apl.washington.edu/zhang/Global_seaice/index.html)). The 20 climatology and linear trends of CMIP5 simulated SIE, SIC and SIV are compared with satellite observations and GIOMAS data. SIE is computed as the total area of all grid cells where SIC exceeds 15%. SIV is computed as the sum of the product of SIC, the area of grid cell and sea ice thickness of each grid cell. All gridded SIC and sea ice 25 thickness are re-gridded onto 1.0° longitude by 1.0° latitude grids before the analysis is performed. In this study, spring is from March to May for the Arctic, and from September to November for the Antarctic. Summer, autumn and winter are defined accordingly.

### Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion





in each month and each season, and the largest trend is in February and the summer season.

The trends of observed Antarctic SIC have large spatial differences (Fig. 3), but the simulated Antarctic SIC trends are almost decreasing everywhere (Fig. 4). Figure 3 shows that decreasing SIC is mainly in the Antarctic Peninsula, which is one of the three high-latitude areas showing rapid regional warming over the last 50 years (Vaughan et al., 2003). SIC also decreases in the Bellingshausen Sea and the Amundsen Sea in summer and autumn. The increasing SIC is mainly in the Ross Sea all year round, and in the Weddell Sea in summer and autumn. Figure 4 clearly shows that CMIP5 MME SIC has decreasing trend everywhere except in the coast of the Amundsen Sea and in part of the Ross Sea in spring and winter.

SIV depends on both sea ice coverage and sea ice thickness. SIV is more directly tied to climate forcing than SIE. So, SIV is an important climate indicator in climate study. Sea ice thickness data are mainly ship-based observations. For the Antarctic, the sea ice thickness data based on ship-based observations are very limited. A climatological  $2.5^{\circ} \times 5.0^{\circ}$  gridded Antarctic sea ice thickness map was provided until 2008 (Worby et al., 2008). Recently, there are several studies using satellite observations of sea ice thickness (Kurtz and Markus, 2012; Xie et al., 2013). These observations provide modelers with useful validation of their models. But, these data are not easily used to long-term simulation validations by now because these data are not too long enough. Here, we use GIOMAS data, which is from a global ice–ocean model (Zhang and Rothrock, 2003) with data assimilation capability.

CMIP5 SIV simulations have more problems than the SIE simulations. The main problems of CMIP5 Antarctic SIV simulations include too big SIV in summer, too small SIV in winter, too large model spread, and wrong linear trend compared with the GIOMAS data (Fig. 5). In February, Antarctic SIV from GIOMAS is  $1.3 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , while the CMIP5 MME is  $2.7 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , which is twice of the GIOMAS. In September, GIOMAS SIV is  $16.7 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , while CMIP5 MME is only  $13.0 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , almost 22% less than the GIOMAS. We can also see from Fig. 5a that the model spread of Antarctic

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



SIV in CMIP5 is very large. The one standard deviation of modeled SIV is much larger than 15 % of the GIOMAS data in every month. Figure 5b shows that GIOMAS SIV has an increasing trend of  $0.39 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , while CMIP5 MME SIV has a decreasing trend of  $-0.36 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ . If we check each CMIP5 model separately, we will also find only eight out of the 49 CMIP5 models have increasing SIV trend that is consistent with the GIOMAS.

### 3.2 Assessment of Arctic sea ice simulations

CMIP5 shows a quite good annual cycle of Arctic SIE, but the model spread is large (Fig. 6a). Arctic SIE reaches the maximum value of 16.3 million  $\text{km}^2$  in March, and reaches the minimum value of 6.8 million  $\text{km}^2$  in September. The MME climatological SIE compares quite well with the satellite-observed SIE, with a correlation coefficient of 0.997; and the modeled error is less than 15 % of the observations in every month. CMIP5 MME SIE is a little bigger than the satellite observation in spring, and the modeled error is quite small at other times. The model spread is large, with one standard deviation of CMIP5 models bigger than 15 % of the observed SIE in every month (Fig. 6a). The model spread in winter is larger than that in summer.

CMIP5 MME SIE shows a decreasing trend that is consistent with the satellite observation, though the decreasing rate is a little smaller than that of the observation (Figs. 6b and 7). The satellite-observed SIE linear trend over the period of 1979–2005 is  $-4.72 \times 10^5 \text{ km}^2 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ , while CMIP5 MME SIE linear trend is only  $-3.70 \times 10^5 \text{ km}^2 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ . Thirty-one out of the 49 CMIP5 models have smaller decreasing rate than the observation. Both observed and CMIP5-simulated SIE in autumn has the largest decreasing trend. CMIP5-simulated difference of SIE decreasing trend between summer and autumn is, however, larger than that of the observations. The main reason is CMIP5-simulated SIE has small reduction in summer, especially in July (Fig. 7). Satellite-observed SIE decreasing rate is 5.95 % per decade in July, while the CMIP5-simulated decreasing rate is 3.57 % per decade. The largest decreasing rate is

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



in September; the observed trend is  $-9.06\%$  per decade and the simulated trend is  $-8.47\%$  per decade.

Figures 8 and 9 show that the spatial patterns of CMIP5-simulated SIC reduction rate are consistent with the observations from 1979 to 2005, but the decreasing rates are smaller than the observed. In spring and winter, the observed decreasing SIC is mainly in the Okhotsk Sea, Baffin Bay, Greenland Sea and Barents Sea; CMIP5-simulated decreasing SIC is also in these regions. In summer and autumn, the main decreasing SIC is in the Chukchi Sea, Barents Sea and Kara Sea (Figs. 8 and 9), and CMIP5 MME SIC has similar characteristics. However, CMIP5 simulations have larger trends in the central Arctic Ocean.

The main problem of CMIP5 simulations is too little Arctic SIV in spring and too large model spread (Fig. 10). In spring, the Arctic has the largest SIV, and CMIP5 has the largest errors. Long-term mean GIOMAS SIV is maximum in April with  $29.3 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ , but the corresponding CMIP5 MME is only  $26.8 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3$ . GIOMAS SIV has minimum in August, while CMIP5 MME reaches its minimum in September. CMIP5 SIV model spread is also very large: one standard deviation for each month is much larger than 15% of GIOMAS SIV. Arctic SIV declined significantly during 1979–2005, at a rate of  $-1.86 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ; CMIP5 MME trend has the same sign but smaller, at  $-1.40 \times 10^3 \text{ km}^3 \text{ decade}^{-1}$ .

## 4 Conclusions and discussion

The first realization of all the 49 CMIP5 historical simulations was evaluated, in terms of the performance of sea ice (Table 1). The Arctic sea ice simulations are better than the Antarctic sea ice simulations, and SIE simulations are better than SIV simulations. CMIP5 MME SIV is too weak in winter and spring because the sea ice thickness in CMIP5 models is too thin in winter and spring compared with the GIOMAS data.

Both satellite-observed Antarctic SIE and GIOMAS Antarctic SIV show increasing trends over the period of 1979–2005, but CMIP5 MME Antarctic SIE and SIV have

### Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion





decreasing trends. Only eight models' SIE and another eight models' SIV show increasing trends. Can these few CMIP5 models give correct Antarctic sea ice trend? If we use these eight CMIP5 models to plot Antarctic SIC trends (not shown) as in Fig. 4, we will find that these eight CMIP5 model mean SIC trends have different spatial patterns with the observations (Fig. 3) although their model mean SIE and SIV have increasing trends.

We can see that the CMIP5 MME does a good job in terms of climatological mean, but their inter-model spread is large. The number of models used in published studies is usually less than the total CMIP5 models. How many models can give similar good simulations as all the available CMIP5 models? We first choose the CMIP5 models randomly. The model number changes from 1 to 49. We then calculate the Antarctic SIV root mean square (RMS) errors between MME and GIOMAS. For each fixed model number, we choose these models randomly many times, and then calculate the mean of the RMS errors. Figure 11 shows the ratio of SIE and SIV RMS errors between the errors calculated using different number of CMIP5 models and the errors calculated using all 49 CMIP5 models. We can see that the model errors decrease quickly as the model number increases; and the more models we use, the smaller error we have. For a fixed model number, the ratios of SIE are larger than the ratios of SIV, and Arctic SIE has the largest ratio. When the model number is greater than 30, the model errors do not change much anymore. If we choose a criterion of RMS error larger than 15% of all the model RMS error, the model number of 22 is the critical number for Arctic SIE. It means that more than 22 CMIP5 models should give similar MME as all 49 CMIP5 models.

*Acknowledgements.* Satellite-observed sea ice concentration data are provided by <http://nsidc.org/data/seaiice/> and GIOMAS sea ice dataset are downloaded from [http://psc.apl.washington.edu/zhang/Global\\_seaiice/index.html](http://psc.apl.washington.edu/zhang/Global_seaiice/index.html). CMIP5 sea ice simulations are downloaded from <http://pcmdi9.llnl.gov/esgf-web-fe/>. The authors thank the above data providers. This work is supported by the National Basic Research Program of China (973 Program) under Grant 2010CB950500, and the Project of Comprehensive Evaluation of Polar Areas on Global and

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## References

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## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



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**Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models**

Q. Shu et al.

---

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures



Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.

Table 1. CMIP5-simulated errors and trends of sea ice extent and sea ice volume.

Data sources or CMIP5 models	RMS error of Antarctic climatological SIE (million km <sup>2</sup> )	Linear trend of Antarctic SIE (10 <sup>5</sup> km <sup>2</sup> decade <sup>-1</sup> )	RMS error of Antarctic climatological SIV (10 <sup>3</sup> km <sup>3</sup> )	Linear trend of Antarctic SIV (10 <sup>3</sup> km <sup>3</sup> decade <sup>-1</sup> )	RMS error of Arctic climatological SIE (million km <sup>2</sup> )	Linear trend of Arctic SIE (10 <sup>5</sup> km <sup>2</sup> decade <sup>-1</sup> )	RMS error of Arctic climatological SIV (10 <sup>3</sup> km <sup>3</sup> )	Linear trend of Arctic SIV (10 <sup>3</sup> km <sup>3</sup> decade <sup>-1</sup> )
Observations or GIOMAS	–	1.56	–	0.39	–	–4.72	–	–1.86
Multi-model ensemble mean (MME)	0.95	–3.36	2.50	–0.36	0.72	–3.70	2.44	–1.40
ACCESS1.0	1.33	–1.72	3.27	–0.15	0.77	–5.51	5.05	–1.58
ACCESS1.3	1.97	–0.97	2.67	–0.03	0.70	–0.78	2.27	–1.05
BCC-CSM1.1	1.71	2.71	2.63	0.09	3.42	–8.79	6.26	–2.01
BCC-CSM1.1-M	1.29	–20.03	3.99	–1.20	2.62	–5.19	9.33	–0.74
BNU-ESM	9.39	–9.65	10.85	–2.12	3.37	–3.80	9.67	–1.96
CanCM4	2.98	–2.79	7.24	–0.06	2.21	–4.97	9.02	–0.38
CanESM2	3.00	–7.74	7.25	–0.15	1.69	–6.80	10.50	–1.18
CCSM4	6.36	–7.34	10.32	–1.56	0.37	–1.34	1.68	–1.54
CCSM1-BGC	5.64	–6.68	9.25	–1.19	0.51	–2.85	1.83	–2.63
CESM1-CAM5	2.36	–5.52	2.56	–0.97	0.53	–3.67	3.00	–1.22
CESM1-CAM5-1-FV2	1.69	–3.16	1.77	–0.22	0.55	–5.07	3.46	–3.63
CESM1-FASTCHEM	5.86	–8.78	9.39	–1.70	0.36	–3.70	2.62	–1.98
CESM1-WACCM	2.81	–6.45	2.82	–0.91	1.36	–2.88	8.10	0.09
CMCC-CESM	1.85	2.91	3.05	0.26	1.89	–2.63	8.97	–1.44
CMCC-CM	0.92	–2.49	3.13	–0.05	1.91	–5.09	13.31	–2.40
CMCC-CMS	1.71	–1.52	3.44	–0.12	0.68	–2.87	8.86	–1.18
CNRM-CM5	4.79	–2.59	6.79	–0.10	0.86	–7.58	6.02	–1.76
CNRM-CM5-2	3.49	4.29	4.88	0.38	2.17	–2.32	1.98	–0.96
CSIRO-Mk3.6	4.69	–1.64	3.83	–0.29	4.03	–5.33	6.49	–2.32
EC-EARTH	1.91	–7.94	3.90	–0.66	0.47	–3.84	4.70	–0.59
FGOALS-g2	4.91	–1.47	6.61	–0.14	2.11	–1.44	–	–
FIO-ESM	5.36	–8.53	12.17	–1.57	0.80	–2.23	1.95	–1.69
GFDL-CM2p1	4.34	–6.33	7.59	–0.19	1.43	–3.76	9.26	–1.01
GFDL-CM3	6.20	–6.82	8.31	–0.30	0.42	–2.89	5.51	–1.18
GFDL-ESM2G	4.26	–4.45	7.32	–0.24	3.97	–7.05	3.57	–1.77
GFDL-ESM2M	6.03	–1.61	8.38	–0.09	0.72	–0.31	8.32	–0.56
GISS-E2-H	6.43	–1.89	6.70	–0.24	2.28	–5.07	7.20	–0.91
GISS-E2-H-CC	1.30	–5.75	2.77	–0.54	2.58	–5.91	6.32	–1.29
GISS-E2-R	4.66	–3.39	6.92	–0.16	2.65	–6.31	6.13	–1.28
GISS-E2-R-CC	4.28	0.82	6.86	0.00	4.02	–5.65	5.66	–1.08
HadCM3	2.92	–2.74	6.12	–0.49	2.51	–4.74	2.94	–2.25
HadGEM2-AO	3.54	–5.31	4.40	–0.42	1.17	–3.81	3.90	–0.98
HadGEM2-CC	3.58	–0.85	4.49	–0.05	1.23	–3.10	1.77	–2.47
HadGEM2-ES	2.90	–3.25	3.86	–0.41	0.96	–6.03	1.91	–1.69
INMCM4	6.43	–4.00	7.25	–0.28	1.32	–0.21	5.31	–0.21
IPSL-CM5A-LR	3.59	–5.03	5.68	–0.26	0.92	–3.03	2.07	–0.96
IPSL-CM5A-MR	4.83	1.69	7.20	0.01	1.34	–2.85	5.60	–1.69
IPSL-CM5B-LR	9.49	0.59	9.12	0.04	1.91	–0.77	7.69	–1.37
MIROC4h	1.54	–7.96	4.34	–0.51	1.62	–3.11	9.59	–1.00
MIROC5	9.69	–1.03	8.96	–0.07	0.86	–6.78	5.48	–3.68
MIROC-ESM	1.10	–5.83	2.65	–0.48	1.87	–1.91	9.51	–1.04
MIROC-ESM-CHEM	1.65	–2.15	1.95	–0.21	1.49	–4.24	8.06	–1.69
MPI-ESM-LR	4.83	–2.95	6.68	–0.19	1.22	–2.48	5.37	–1.23
MPI-ESM-MR	4.60	4.41	6.43	0.24	1.23	–4.94	5.21	–1.75
MPI-ESM-P	4.66	–0.25	6.60	0.05	1.34	–1.83	6.93	–0.80
MRI-CGCM3	1.33	1.52	2.47	0.22	3.70	–1.44	4.72	–0.55
MRI-ESM1	1.17	–0.62	2.18	–0.03	3.25	–4.07	5.22	–1.56
NorESM1-M	1.06	–0.71	5.00	–0.07	1.13	–1.98	4.81	–0.68
NorESM1-ME	4.95	–3.77	8.47	–0.74	1.11	–0.21	5.39	–0.46

Title Page

Abstract Introduction

Conclusions References

Tables Figures

◀ ▶

◀ ▶

Back Close

Full Screen / Esc

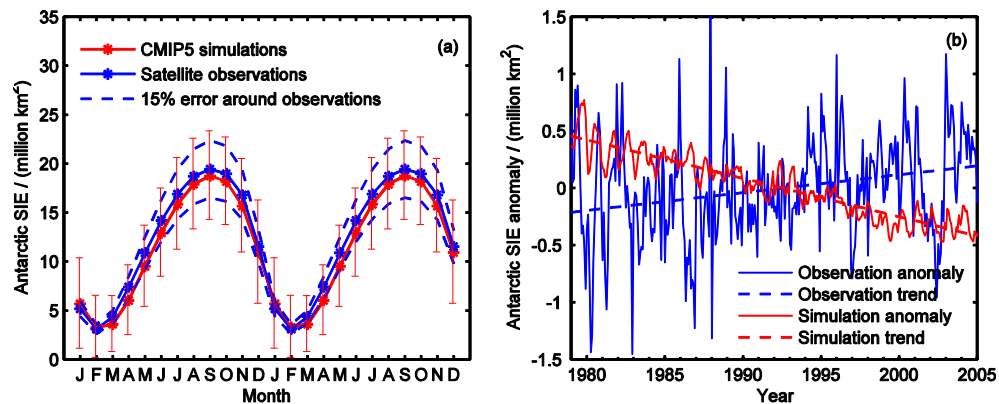
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Interactive Discussion



## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.



**Figure 1.** Climatology (a), anomaly and linear trend (b) of satellite observed and CMIP5 simulated Antarctic sea ice extent during 1979–2005. Two annual cycles are plotted in (a). The error bar is the range of one standard deviation.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

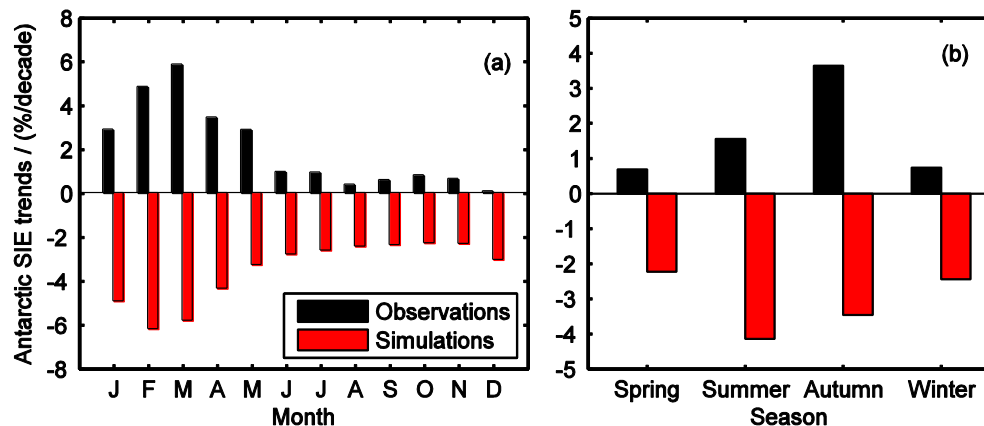
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Interactive Discussion



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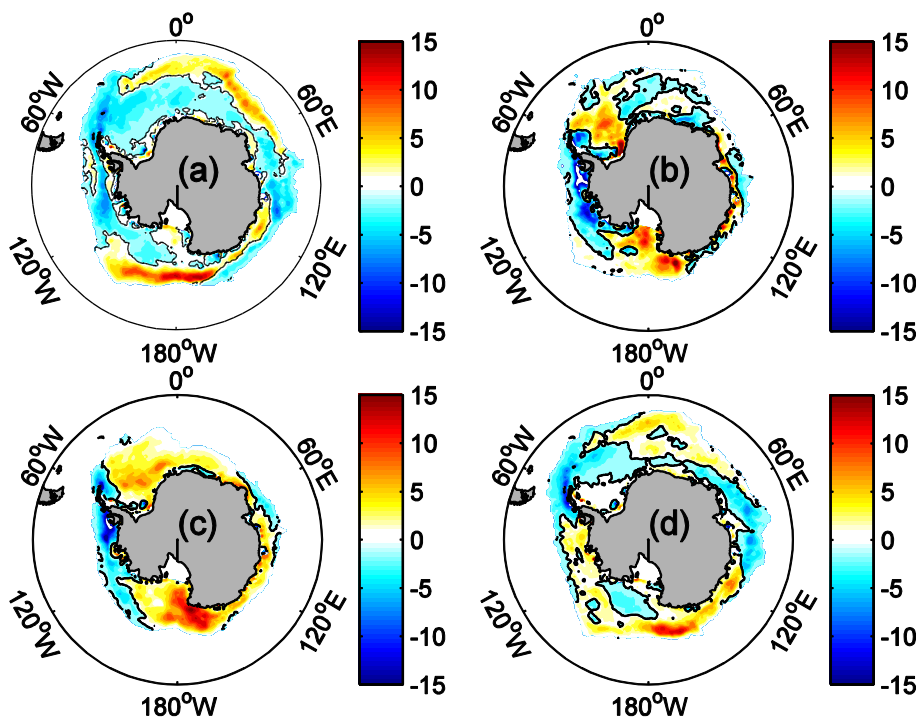
Q. Shu et al.



**Figure 2.** Monthly (a) and seasonal (b) linear trends of satellite observed and CMIP5-simulated Antarctic sea ice extent during 1979–2005.

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

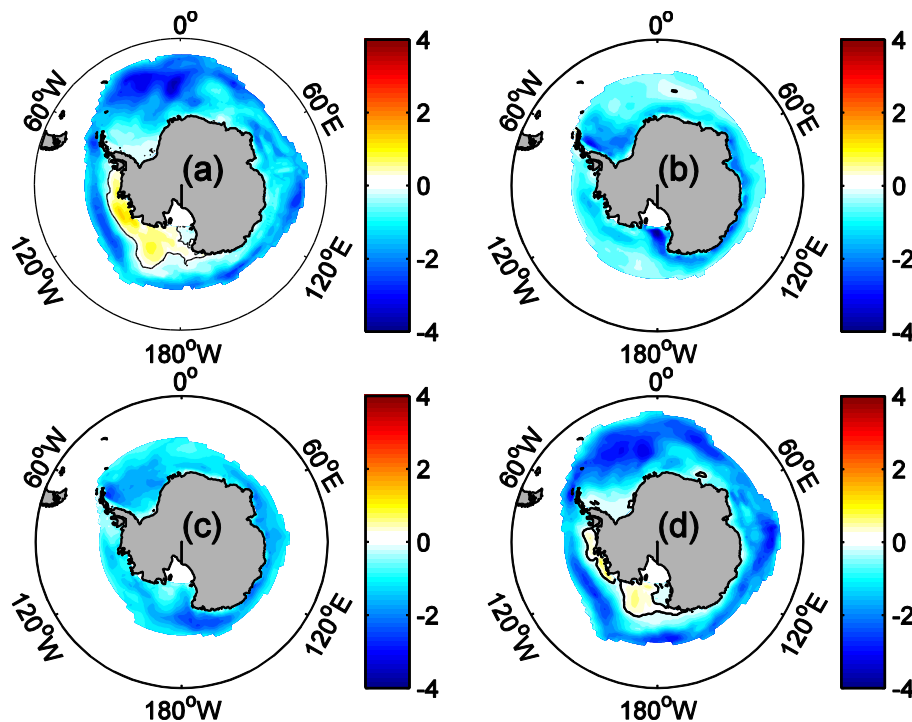
Q. Shu et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

**Figure 3.** Linear trends (unit:  $\% \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ) of satellite observed Antarctic sea ice concentration during 1979 to 2005. (a) Spring, (b) summer, (c) autumn, and (d) winter.

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.



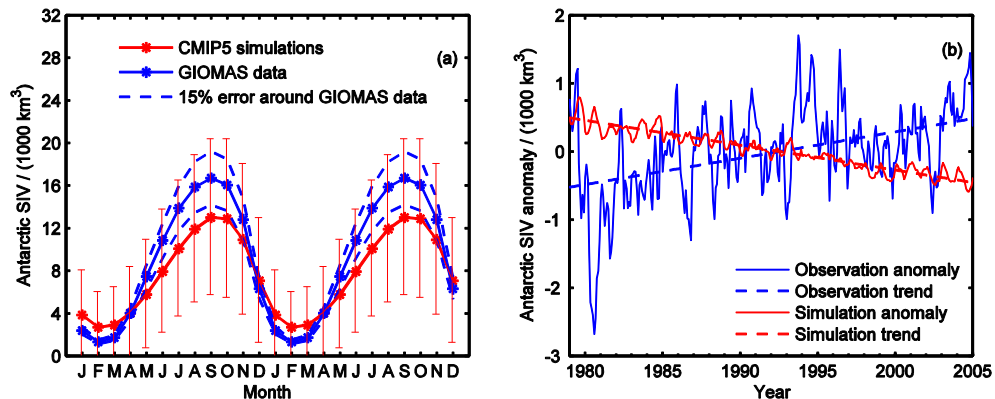
**Figure 4.** Linear trends (units: % decade<sup>-1</sup>) of CMIP5-simulated Antarctic sea ice concentration during 1979–2005. (a) Spring, (b) summer, (c) autumn, and (d) winter.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)



## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.



**Figure 5.** Climatology (a), anomaly and linear trend (b) of GIOMAS and CMIP5 simulated Antarctic sea ice volume during 1979–2005. Two annual cycles are plotted in (a). The error bar is the range of one standard deviation.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

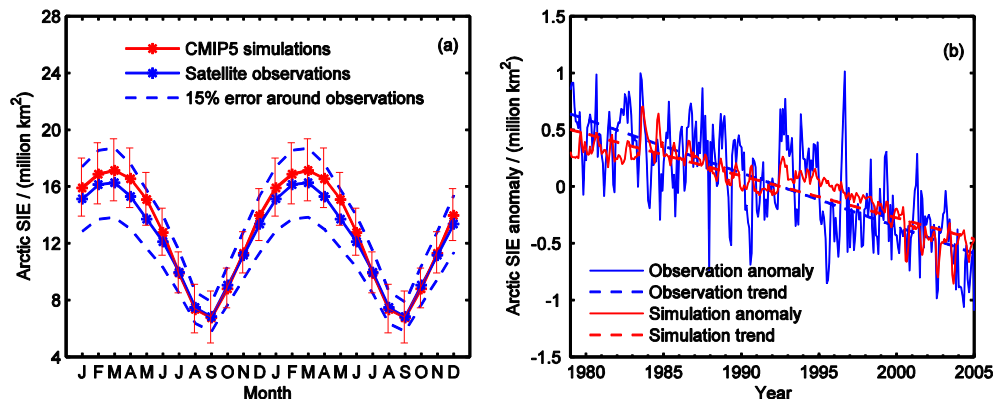
Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.



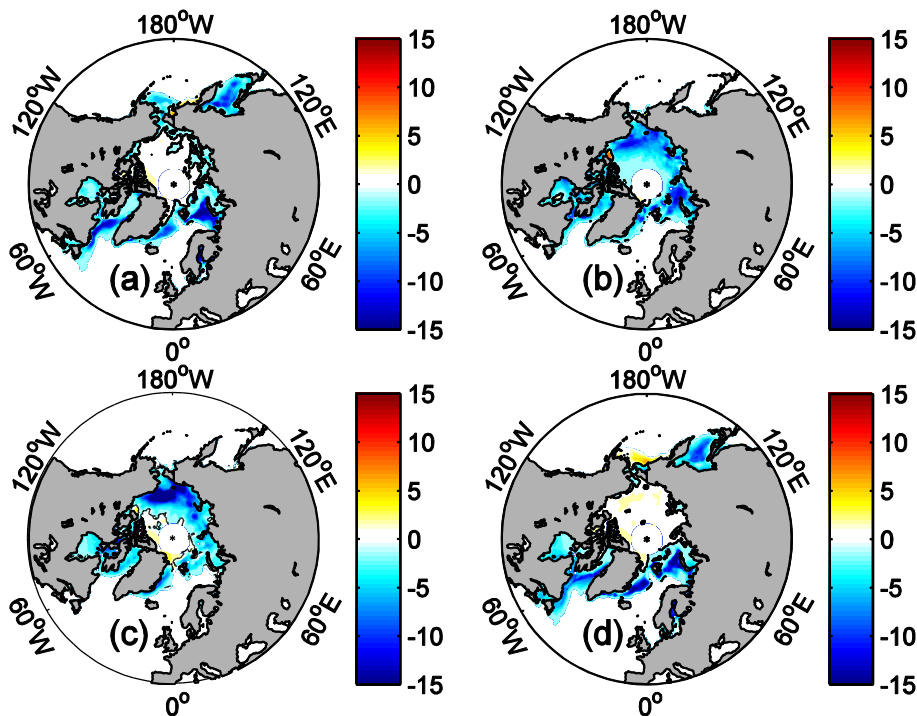
**Figure 6.** Climatology (a), anomaly and linear trend (b) of satellite observed and CMIP5-simulated Arctic sea ice extent during 1979–2005. Two annual cycles are plotted in (a). The error bar is the range of one standard deviation.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[⏪](#)[⏩](#)[◀](#)[▶](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)



## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

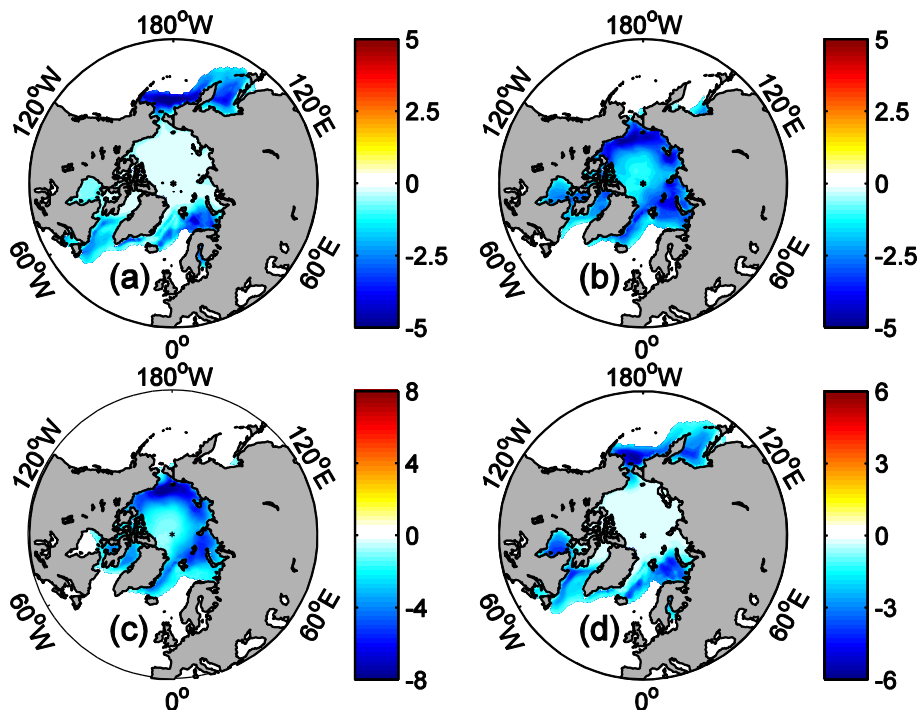
Q. Shu et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

**Figure 8.** Linear trends (units:  $\% \text{decade}^{-1}$ ) of satellite observed Arctic sea ice concentration during 1979–2005. (a) Spring, (b) summer, (c) autumn, and (d) winter.

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

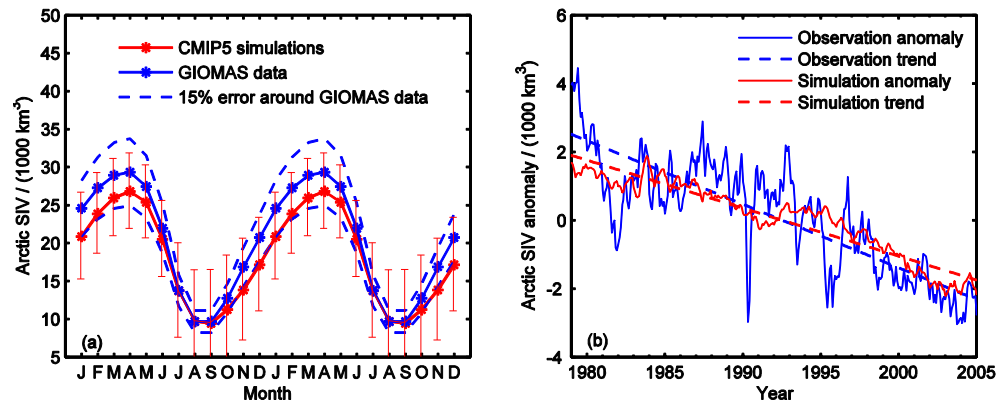
Q. Shu et al.

[Title Page](#)[Abstract](#)[Introduction](#)[Conclusions](#)[References](#)[Tables](#)[Figures](#)[Back](#)[Close](#)[Full Screen / Esc](#)[Printer-friendly Version](#)[Interactive Discussion](#)

**Figure 9.** Linear trends (units:  $\% \text{ decade}^{-1}$ ) of CMIP5-simulated Arctic sea ice concentration during 1979–2005. (a) Spring, (b) summer, (c) autumn, and (d) winter.

## Assessment of sea ice simulations in the CMIP5 Models

Q. Shu et al.



**Figure 10.** Climatology (a), anomaly and linear trend (b) of GIOMAS and CMIP5-simulated Arctic sea ice volume during 1979–2005. Two annual cycles are plotted in (a). The error bar is the range of one standard deviation.

Title Page

Abstract

Introduction

Conclusions

References

Tables

Figures

◀

▶

◀

▶

Back

Close

Full Screen / Esc

Printer-friendly Version

Interactive Discussion



