

**Editor:**

Dear Authors,

Thanks for the revised version of your paper which has been significantly improved thanks to both reviewers. As both of them are happy with your revised version, it is a pleasure for me to accept your paper for final publication in TC.

However, could you, before uploading final files, make the minor changes requested by reviewers ? There is also the question of the manuscript type listed here: [https://www.the-cryosphere.net/about/manuscript\\_types.html](https://www.the-cryosphere.net/about/manuscript_types.html)

I think that your paper fits indeed better to "Brief Communication: (b) report/discuss on significant matters of policy and perspective related to the science of the journal, including "personal" commentary" but your paper is perhaps too long for this. Therefore I suggest you to add Brief Communication in your title according to this manuscript type and we will see with the Copernicus editorial team if they are Ok to keep your paper in this format although you have more than 20 references.

Best regards,

Xavier Fettweis

Dear Xavier Fettweis,

Thanks for coordinating this. We've made some of the suggested changes and argued why we haven't made the others below.

Thanks,

Pete Irvine

**Referee #1:**

Clearly, much work has been invested in this manuscript since its initial submission. In this regard, the GeoMIP simulations presented in section 3.2 are refreshingly novel and quantitative.

At this point, my primary reservation is that the authors seem to have rebutted the majority of R1 comments outside the main manuscript. It is not rebuttals themselves, but rather that this relevant content is not available to readers whom might have similar questions. For example, while I am pleased to see Ohmura2001 appear in the manuscript, what about contextualizing 4 W/m<sup>2</sup> against characteristic surface energy budget terms? Or what about explicitly saying these per Tg SO<sub>4</sub> cost estimates are different than those of Robuck et al. 2009? Why not mention that you are aware of differences in aerosol injection (and cloud) heights and properties between mid latitude and Arctic? These insights provide little service to the general readership when tucked away in the rebuttal letter.

Robuck et al. 2009's cost estimates do not differ from those presented here, with an estimated annual deployment cost of \$0.225 Billion to \$4.175 Billion per year per Mt, and so we have added this reference to this list.

We provide only a very brief description of stratospheric aerosol geoengineering due to limited space and a focus on its potential cryosphere effects. As we argued, the altitude of the aerosol cloud does not matter for the purposes here and so was excluded from our brief survey. Motivated readers can refer to the cited studies to find these and many other details about stratospheric aerosol geoengineering. We have rephrased a few sentences to provide a little more detail though:

“Releasing a few Terragrams of material per year into the lower Tropical stratosphere (~20km) would produce an aerosol layer with global coverage. Multiple, independent feasibility assessments of the proposal conclude that this could be achieved at a cost of order one billion US dollars per Terragram using high-altitude jets (McClellan et al., 2012; Moriyama et al., 2016; Robock et al. 2009).”

We do not believe that the right comparison is between the global radiative forcing from solar geoengineering and the characteristic local surface energy budget terms which is why we have not included this. That the total global radiative forcing for both the GHG warming and solar geoengineering scenarios is perhaps only equal to 4% of the local incoming shortwave at some location is not the most important point, rather we believe the differences between the effects of these forcings is what matters most. Our quantitative evaluation of the differences between the effects of these two forcings in the surface mass balance section.

My secondary reservation remains fit with journal, or at least article format. The authors have responded to this saying the article "was somehow between a commentary and a technical review." In terms of format, I do not see Brief Communications as a venue for review of any type. By avoiding a full length TC article, the authors skirt a greater onus on thoroughness and detail. But clearly the editorship has invited a revision within this format. In terms of journal fit, I think the stated sentiment that "novelty is not the central goal" really runs counter to The Cryosphere ambition. The inherent challenge of interdisciplinary publications is to be simultaneously relevant and up-to-date with multiple communities. In this I can see that the authors have chosen no small task.

We believe the editor is satisfied with the paper as is.

#### **Referee #2:**

11-13: The sentence should be reversed. Mention cryosphere and then melt otherwise melt is not in immediate context.

Done

13 : ...ability to reverse ...

Both comments are addressed in new phrasing: “The efficacy of solar geoengineering at reducing changes to the cryosphere is uncertain; solar geoengineering could reduce temperatures and so slow melt, but its ability to reverse ice sheet collapse once initiated may be limited.”

16 : models

Rephrased to: “Studies of natural analogues and model simulations support this conclusion.”

358-360 : Misleading. The BISICLES experiment was only reversed (from a stable state) because the entire water column was instantaneously cooled. As written a reader might assume it was just surface cooling.

We have addressed this and rephrased this as follows:

“However, initial results from the BISICLES model evaluating the response of an idealized vulnerable marine glacier to imposed warming found that returning the entire water column to cooler conditions reversed the retreat that had begun during the warming (Asay-Davis et al., 2016). It seems reasonable to expect that solar geoengineering, like emissions cuts, may help to prevent other marine glaciers from becoming unstable by limiting surface melt that could lead to ice-shelf collapse but would have a limited ability to reverse sub-surface warming on decadal timescales.”

1 **Brief Communication: Understanding solar geoengineering’s potential to limit sea level rise requires**  
2 **attention from cryosphere experts**

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8  
9 **Abstract**

10 Stratospheric aerosol geoengineering, a form of solar geoengineering, is a proposal to add a reflective layer of  
11 aerosol to the stratosphere to reduce net radiative forcing and so to reduce the risks of climate change. The efficacy  
12 of solar geoengineering at reducing changes to the cryosphere is uncertain; sSolar geoengineering could reduce  
13 temperatures and so slow melt, but the efficacy of solar geoengineering at reducing changes to the cryosphere is  
14 uncertain as is its ability to reverse ice sheet collapse once initiated may be limited. Here we review the literature on  
15 solar geoengineering and the cryosphere and identify the key uncertainties that research could address. Solar  
16 geoengineering may be more effective at reducing surface melt than a reduction in greenhouse forcing that produces  
17 the same global-average temperature response. Studies of natural analogues and model simulations supports this  
18 conclusion. However, changes below the surfaces of the ocean and ice-sheets may strongly limit the potential of  
19 solar geoengineering to reduce the retreat of marine glaciers. High-quality process model studies may illuminate  
20 these questions. Solar geoengineering is a contentious emerging issue in climate policy and it is critical that the  
21 potential, limits and risks of these proposals are made clear for policy makers.

22 **1. Future Sea-level rise and the potential of solar geoengineering**

23 How far sea-levels would rise under some scenario of future climate change depends mainly on global temperature  
24 rise, and uncertainties in projections rise rapidly as warming increases more than 2°C above pre-industrial (Jevrejeva  
25 et al., 2016; Kopp et al., 2014). Most of this uncertainty is due to a lack of agreement on how the large ice sheets  
26 will respond (Bamber and Aspinall, 2013; Oppenheimer et al., 2016). For example, two recent high-profile  
27 publications made conflicting estimates of Antarctica’s contribution to sea-level rise by 2100 with a best-guess of  
28 10cm (Ritz et al., 2015), and of around 1m (DeConto and Pollard, 2016).

29 A rapid transition towards a carbon-free economy will reduce additional temperature increases but the temperature  
30 response to cumulative emissions—and thus the impact on sea level—will remain for millennia without measures  
31 beyond emissions cuts (Clark et al., 2016). Two broad categories of measures might reduce long-term commitments  
32 to global sea level rise: solar geoengineering and atmospheric carbon removal. Solar geoengineering which  
33 describes a set of proposals to increase Earth’s albedo, is not a substitute for emissions cuts. But it could offer an  
34 independent means of temporarily reducing radiative forcing and thus the impacts of climate change, and so be a  
35 complement to emissions cuts. The two responses may be synergistic: carbon removal can reduce the long-term  
36 driver of climate change, while solar geoengineering might temporarily reduce the net radiative forcing. Our focus is  
37 on assessing solar geoengineering impact on sea level rise because existing research is quite limited and because its  
38 effects (per unit temperature change) may not be the same as those achieved by reducing temperature by de-  
39 carbonizing.

40 The human, environmental and financial costs of sea level rise are substantial. The rapidly rising concentration of  
41 population and infrastructure in coastal cities mean that costs of flooding without adaptation measures are projected  
42 to be \$50 trillion per year by 2100, while coastal protection would cost \$15-70 billion per year (Hinkel et al., 2014).  
43 One important consideration is that sea level rise is not globally uniform, due to a combination of local factors:  
44 glacial isostatic adjustment and ground water extraction resulting in local vertical land movement; the self-  
45 gravitational influence of mass loss from the large ice sheets; and changes in ocean dynamics and rates of volume  
46 expansion of warming sea water. Taking all these together, Jevrejeva et al. (2016) find that the 80-90% of global  
47 coastlines will experience sea level rises about twice as large as the global ocean average.

48 Whilst some, including one of us (Keith), have been working on solar geoengineering for decades, more than ten  
49 times as many articles have been published on the topic since 2007 than before. Whilst many proposals for solar  
50 geoengineering have been made, work now focuses on a few of the more likely candidates. Marine Cloud  
51 Brightening, a proposal to increase the albedo of marine strato-cumulus by releasing sea-salt aerosols from ships  
52 (Latham, 1990); Cirrus Cloud Thinning, a proposal to suppress cirrus cloud persistence, and hence reduce their  
53 warming effect, by releasing ice nuclei to encourage the formation of larger, shorter-lived ice crystals (Mitchell and  
54 Finnegan, 2009); and Stratospheric Aerosol Geoengineering, a proposal to release aerosol particles into the  
55 stratosphere to create a persistent reflective aerosol layer scattering a small fraction of incoming light back to space  
56 (Budyko, 1977). Of these proposals stratospheric aerosol geoengineering is the most likely to be technically  
57 achievable. ~~Releasing a few Terragrams of material per year into the lower Tropical stratosphere (~20km) would~~  
58 ~~produce an aerosol layer with global coverage.~~ Multiple, independent feasibility assessments of the proposal  
59 conclude that ~~a substantial cooling could be achieved with a few Terragrams of material released per year and that~~  
60 ~~lifting a Terragram to the lower stratosphere (~20km) this~~ could be achieved at a cost of order one billion US dollars  
61 per Terragram ~~using high-altitude jets (McClellan et al., 2012; Moriyama et al., 2016; Robock et al.,~~  
62 ~~2009)(McClellan et al., 2012; Moriyama et al., 2016).~~ The clouds and aerosols chapter of the last IPCC report  
63 concluded that "there is medium confidence that stratospheric aerosol [geoengineering] is scalable to counter the  
64 [radiative forcing] from increasing [Greenhouse Gases (GHG)s] at least up to approximately 4 W m<sup>-2</sup>  
65 [approximately the forcing a doubling of CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations]" (Boucher et al., 2013). For this reason, here we focus  
66 on stratospheric aerosol injection and unless otherwise stated, solar geoengineering will heretofore refer to  
67 stratospheric aerosol geoengineering only.

68 The tens of climate model studies of solar geoengineering prior to 2013 were summarized in the last IPCC report  
69 (Boucher et al., 2013): "Models consistently suggest that [solar geoengineering] would generally reduce climate  
70 differences compared to a world with elevated GHG concentrations and no [solar geoengineering]; however, there  
71 would also be residual regional differences in climate (e.g., temperature and rainfall) when compared to a climate  
72 without elevated GHGs." This reduction in the magnitude of many climate trends means that solar geoengineering  
73 may offer a means to reduce the risks of climate change (Keith and Irvine, 2016).

74 Beyond its effect on climate (which will be discussed in more depth below), stratospheric aerosol injection would  
75 have a number of side-effects (Irvine et al., 2016). Simulations of stratospheric sulphate aerosol injection (the most  
76 commonly analyzed scenario of stratospheric aerosol geoengineering) consistently show that it would lower ozone  
77 concentrations, delaying the recovery of the ozone hole by a number of decades (Pitari et al., 2014; Tilmes et al.,  
78 2012). As well as scattering light back to space the stratospheric aerosol cloud would also scatter light downwards  
79 shifting the balance of direct to diffuse light which could boost plant productivity though would reduce the  
80 efficiency of concentrating solar power plants (Kravitz et al., 2012). The aerosols would also absorb radiation,  
81 warming the stratosphere affecting stratospheric chemistry and dynamics (Tilmes et al., 2009). The magnitude of  
82 these side-effects will depend on the properties of the injected aerosols, and alternatives to sulphate particles may  
83 have substantially reduced side-effects (Keith et al., 2016).

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84 In its seminal 2009 report (Shepherd et al., 2009), the United Kingdom's Royal Society predicted that the social and  
85 political challenges posed by solar geoengineering would be far greater than the technical ones. Its potentially low  
86 cost could mean that individual nations or very wealthy individuals could have the resources to deploy solar  
87 geoengineering (Weitzman, 2014). The global impacts of any large-scale deployment could be the source of  
88 international tension and poses a serious challenge for international governance (Victor, 2008).

89 Technical analyses and climate model simulations suggest solar geoengineering may offer a means of reducing the  
90 risks of climate change but it would also introduce new risks, both physical and socio-political. A robust  
91 understanding of the potential and limits of solar geoengineering as a means to reduce climate risks is a necessary,  
92 but not sufficient, basis for a much broader discussion of this idea. This study aims to highlight the key questions  
93 around the sea-level rise response to solar geoengineering that only the sea-level and cryosphere community will be  
94 able to resolve. In section 2, we provide a brief review of studies into the sea-level rise response to solar  
95 geoengineering noting the methodological shortcomings and gaps in the literature. In section 3, we evaluate how the  
96 effects of solar geoengineering and a reduction in GHG forcing could on sea-level rise could differ, discussing its  
97 potential effects on thermosteric sea-level rise, surface mass balance and on ocean-driven melt of ice-shelves and  
98 discharge from marine glaciers. In the sub-section on surface mass balance we make an initial assessment on the  
99 relative efficacy of solar geoengineering as seen in the Geoengineering Model Intercomparison Project (GeoMIP).  
100 In section 4, we summarize the results briefly and make a number of recommendations for research.

## 101 2. Critical review of existing literature on solar geoengineering and sea-level rise

102 As solar geoengineering would reduce temperatures across the world, offsetting some of the warming from elevated  
103 GHG concentrations, it is clear that to first order it would reduce both the thermal expansion of the oceans and the  
104 melting of land ice. Wigley (2006), Moore et al. (2010) and Irvine et al. (2012) illustrate this using simple models of  
105 the sea-level rise response to a range of solar geoengineering scenarios. Moore et al. (2010) used a semi-empirical  
106 model relating radiative forcing to sea level calibrated by tide gauge data from the past 200 years to evaluate a range  
107 of different forms of solar geoengineering. Wigley (2006) and Irvine et al. (2012) adapted the simple models used in  
108 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change third and fourth assessment reports, respectively, to evaluate a  
109 range of different levels of cooling from solar geoengineering. Moore et al. (2015) used the relationship observed  
110 between sea surface temperatures and Atlantic hurricanes to evaluate the effects of solar geoengineering on storm  
111 surges along the East coast of North America.

112 In addition to these studies with models of reduced complexity there have been a few studies employing glacier and  
113 ice sheet models. Irvine et al. (2009) conducted a study of the response of the Greenland Ice Sheet to a range of  
114 idealized and fixed scenarios of solar geoengineering deployment using the GLIMMER ice dynamics model driven  
115 by temperature and precipitation anomalies from a climate model and found that under an idealized scenario of  
116 quadrupled CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations solar geoengineering could slow and even prevent the collapse of the ice sheet.  
117 Applegate and Keller (2015) used a simplified ice dynamics model driven by an Earth system model of intermediate  
118 complexity to evaluate the response of the Greenland Ice Sheet to scenarios of future GHG emissions and solar  
119 geoengineering deployment. They found that whilst solar geoengineering could slow or halt melting, there is strong  
120 hysteresis and restoring temperatures would not lead to a rapid recovery of the ice sheet. Zhao et al. (2017) evaluate  
121 the response of the 94,000 High Mountain Asia glaciers using an empirical model based on each glacier's median  
122 elevation sensitivity to changes in only temperature and precipitation. Under scenarios where solar geoengineering  
123 halts regional temperature increases, 30% of present-day glaciated area will still be lost this century due to the  
124 glaciers being out of balance with present day climate.

125 These studies illustrate that if solar geoengineering were deployed it could reduce the rate of sea-level rise  
126 substantially compared with greenhouse forcing alone. However, all studies to date have employed simplified global  
127 models. Thus these studies miss out on some of the fundamental differences between scenarios of climate change  
128 with and without solar geoengineering.

129 Whilst increasing the planetary albedo would undoubtedly cool the climate, the effects of a reduction in incoming  
130 light differ substantially from the heat-trapping effects of greenhouse gas forcing. GHG forcing acts more-or-less  
131 uniformly, whereas solar forcing acts only when the sun is up. Offsetting the GHG forcing with solar forcing would  
132 therefore produce seasonal, diurnal and latitudinal differences in radiative forcing.

133 Furthermore, solar forcing acts primarily on the surface whereas GHG forcing acts most strongly on the middle  
134 troposphere where infrared radiation escapes to space. As a result, solar forcing reduces the intensity of the  
135 hydrological cycle more strongly than does a reduction in GHG forcing that produces the same top-of-the-  
136 atmosphere radiative forcing. Bala et al. (2008) evaluated the sensitivity of the global hydrological cycle, finding a  
137  $2.4\%K^{-1}$  change in global mean precipitation for solar forcing and only a  $1.5\%K^{-1}$  for  $CO_2$  forcing. They note that  
138 insolation changes result in relatively larger changes in net radiative fluxes at the surface than  $CO_2$  forcing resulting  
139 in larger changes in sensible and latent heat fluxes.

140 Beyond this fundamental difference in the climate response to solar forcing, some stratospheric aerosols, particularly  
141 sulfuric acid the most important single proposal, have significant near infrared absorption bands that would result in  
142 a warming of the stratosphere. This warming would have dynamic implications, for example McCusker et al. (2015)  
143 find significant changes in circulation in the Antarctic stratosphere which propagates down to affect surface winds  
144 and the mixing of waters around Antarctica..

145 These differences between greenhouse gas and shortwave forcing matter for making predictions of the surface mass  
146 balance of glaciers and ice-sheets: Melting of ice peaks during the day in summer when it is most sensitive to  
147 changes in surface energy balance; Changes in snowfall amount and seasonality would affect glacier mass balance;  
148 And, solar geoengineering would alter atmospheric and oceanic circulation patterns which can affect the upwelling  
149 of warm waters around ice shelves, weakening them. In the following sections we will identify how solar  
150 geoengineering could affect these factors and identify the most pressing uncertainties.

### 151 **3. Response of sea-level rise to solar geoengineering**

152 In this section we evaluate the potential effects of solar geoengineering on the various contributions to sea-level rise,  
153 addressing thermosteric sea-level rise, surface mass balance, and ice-shelf collapse and dynamic mass loss. In  
154 making this evaluation we aim to bring light to two overarching questions:

- 155 • How effective is solar geoengineering at reducing a given contribution to sea-level rise as compared to a  
156 reduction in GHG forcing that produced the same global-average change in temperature? Would, for  
157 example, one Celsius of global average cooling from solar geoengineering lower the surface-mass-balance  
158 contribution to sea level rise by more or less than would one Celsius of cooling achieved by reduced GHG  
159 forcing?
- 160 • What fundamental limits are there to the potential for solar geoengineering to reduce or reverse sea-level  
161 rise? That is, in what ways do the contributions to sea-level rise exhibit hysteresis or tipping points that  
162 would make halting or reversing sea-level rise with solar geoengineering more difficult than may be  
163 expected?

#### 164 **3.1. Thermosteric Sea-level rise**

165 Global thermosteric sea-level rise is the simplest contribution to global sea-level rise. Thermosteric sea level can be  
166 computed from the density profile over depth, which is derived from temperature and salinity data, (Dangendorf et  
167 al., 2014). Changes in temperature dominate steric sea level variability. A reduction in total radiative forcing no  
168 matter if it comes from a reduction in GHG forcing or from solar geoengineering, will produce the same reduction in  
169 heat transfer to the ocean and so the same reduction in thermosteric sea-level rise.

170 Bouttes et al. (2012) explore the reversibility of thermosteric sea-level rise using a coupled climate model for a  
171 range of CO<sub>2</sub> ramp-up and ramp-down scenarios, though the results apply equally to the case of solar  
172 geoengineering. They find that the thermosteric sea-level rise response to their scenarios can be roughly  
173 approximated by the integral of radiative forcing which closely corresponds to the total heat uptake of the oceans  
174 over the simulations. This implies that to halt thermosteric sea-level rise, radiative forcing would need to be restored  
175 to pre-industrial conditions. As the total forcing is ramped down, the warmed oceans become out of equilibrium with  
176 the now-cooled atmosphere and slowly give off the heat they absorbed, gradually reversing the thermosteric sea-  
177 level rise that had occurred during the ramp-up (See figure 1 of Bouttes et al. (2012)).

### 178 3.2. Surface Mass Balance

179 Many ice-sheet and glacier models use a simple parameterization of surface mass balance, using a positive degree-  
180 day factor to estimate the amount of melt per degree above freezing at the glacier surface (Ohmura, 2001). Degree  
181 day factors are determined empirically and vary due to surface albedo, meaning that a weathered ice surface such as  
182 the Greenland ice margin are rather dark and have high degree-day factors, while pristine snow cover has a low  
183 factor. This degree-day approach has been used in all studies of solar geoengineering's effect on surface mass  
184 balance to date but it has some important limitations.

185 Fundamentally the surface melt rate depends on the availability of energy at the surface; this means that net  
186 shortwave, net longwave, sensible and latent fluxes all matter. Despite only accounting for temperature, degree-day  
187 approaches generally produce similar results to more complete energy balance models for surface melt, this is  
188 because downwelling longwave, which typically is the dominant contributor to the energy flux, correlates well with  
189 surface air temperature since much of the downwelling longwave is emitted in the first 1 km of the atmosphere  
190 (Ohmura, 2001). However, degree-day approaches cannot capture the full response to changes in energy fluxes and  
191 a look at some case studies reveals that changes in insolation can have outsized impacts which will be under-  
192 estimated by degree-day approaches.

193 Increased summer insolation at high-latitudes during the Eemian interglacial period (115-130 kyr BP) raised  
194 temperatures but also directly affected surface melt. Van de Berg et al. (2011) made an attempt to separate the  
195 contributions of elevated temperatures and increased solar forcing and suggested that 45% of the change in surface  
196 mass balance could be attributed to the changed solar forcing alone.

197 Volcanic eruptions provide a more contemporary analogy to the potential effects of solar geoengineering on surface  
198 melt. Fettweis et al. (2007) simulated the surface mass balance of Greenland between 1979 and 2006 and find  
199 maxima for surface mass balance in 1983 and 1992, the years after the El Chichon and Pinatubo eruptions,  
200 respectively. Hanna et al. (2008) combine observations and modeling to evaluate the surface mass balance of  
201 Greenland over a longer period finding that the years following El Chichon and Pinatubo have the third lowest and  
202 the lowest runoff, and the third and sixth greatest surface mass balance, respectively between 1958 and 2006.

203 In an analysis of recent changes over Greenland, Hofer et al. (2017) found that the substantial reduction in cloud  
204 cover over Greenland in the past two decades is the likeliest cause for the accelerated mass loss from the ice-sheet  
205 over this period. To arrive at this result they simply calculated how much melt would result from the change in  
206 downward surface shortwave energy received over the melt season as a result of the change in cloud cover, and  
207 compared this against the other contributions to melt and accumulation. They find that the ~10% reduction in  
208 summer cloud cover over Greenland in the past two decades led to a ~4000 Gt loss of mass making it the dominant  
209 driver of surface mass balance change in this period. In Svalbard the opposite has been seen, with less melt than  
210 projected by degree-day models of glacier mass balance due to an increase in cloud cover partially offsetting the  
211 increased temperatures Slangen et al. (2016). Giesen and Oerlemans (2013) and Lang et al. (2015) use glacier mass  
212 balance models that account for this change in surface shortwave and produce a better fit to observations.

213 These examples suggest that solar geoengineering could be more effective at changing surface melt than achieving  
 214 the same reduction in temperature with a reduction in GHG forcing. To evaluate the differences in the drivers of  
 215 surface mass balance we conduct a simple analysis of the well-studied GeoMIP G1 experiment, in which the  
 216 radiative forcing from an instantaneous quadrupling of CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations is offset by a reduction in the solar  
 217 constant sufficient to restore the pre-industrial radiative balance and global-mean temperature (Kravitz et al. 2011).  
 218 Kravitz et al. (2013) provide an overview of the climate response to this experiment from 12 Earth System Models,  
 219 and we analyze data for these same 12 models.

220 The models that ran the GeoMIP G1 experiment did not perfectly restore global-mean-temperatures to the pre-  
 221 industrial, although the differences in top of atmosphere radiative forcing were specified to be less than 0.1Wm<sup>-2</sup>. As  
 222 we are interested in the relative efficacy of solar geoengineering compared to an equivalent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> forcing  
 223 it is necessary to rescale these results so that they match the models' pre-industrial global-mean temperature.

$$224 \quad F = \frac{(GMT_{4xCO_2} - GMT_{control})}{(GMT_{4xCO_2} - GMT_{G1})}$$

225 Where, F is the ratio between the global-mean temperature (GMT) anomaly of 4xCO<sub>2</sub> - control and of 4xCO<sub>2</sub> - G1.  
 226 This ratio is greater than 1 if G1 is warmer than the control and less than 1 if it cooler than the control. This ratio can  
 227 then be used to rescale the effects of the reduction in solar constant to produce a synthetic scenario G1\* in which  
 228 global-mean temperatures would be identical to the control case:

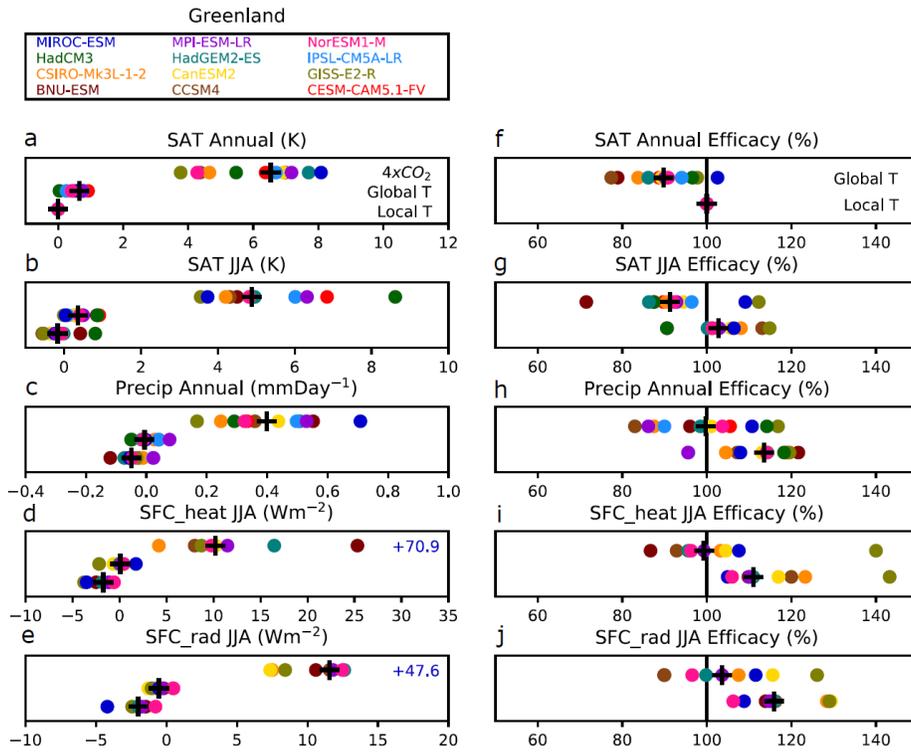
$$229 \quad X_{G1^*} = X_{4xCO_2} + F \times (X_{G1} - X_{4xCO_2})$$

230 Where X is the variable to be rescaled. We apply this equation to all variables in our analysis. We also generate  
 231 scenarios where regional, annual-mean temperatures are restored using the same approach (G1-Greenland and G1-  
 232 Antarctica).

233 Figures 1 and 2 compare the regional-mean anomalies from the control for the 4xCO<sub>2</sub>, G1\* and G1-local  
 234 experiments, and the "efficacy" of G1\* and G1-local at offsetting 4xCO<sub>2</sub> trends for Greenland and Antarctica,  
 235 respectively. Efficacy is defined as the fraction of the 4xCO<sub>2</sub> trend offset:

$$236 \quad E = \frac{X_{4xCO_2} - X_{Geo}}{X_{4xCO_2} - X_{control}} \times 100\%$$

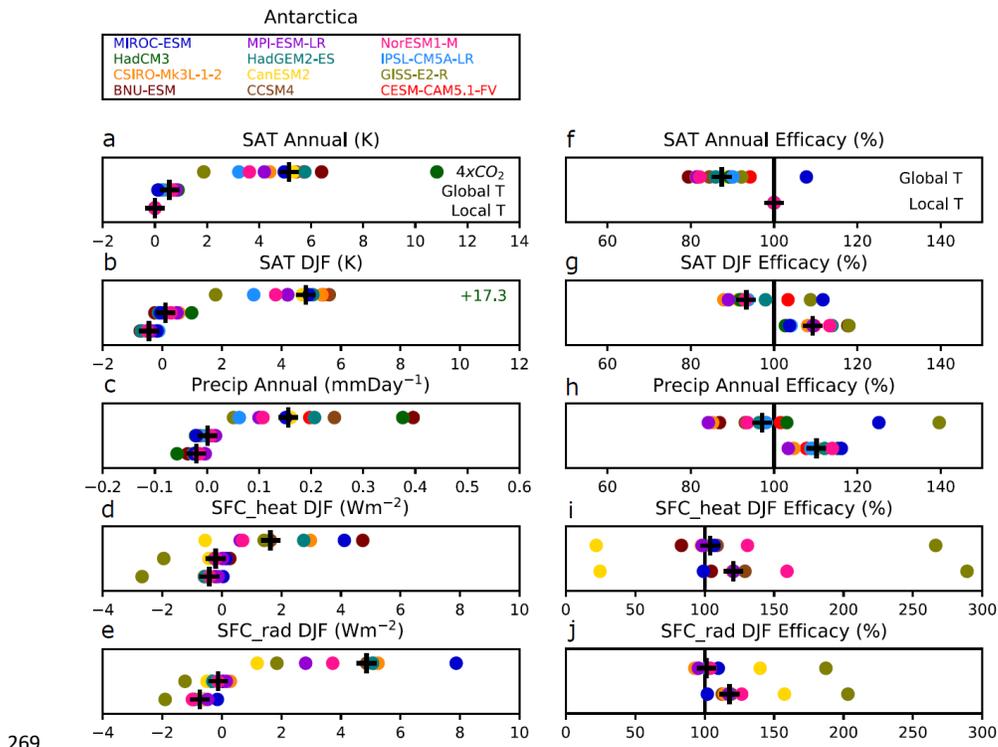
237 As an example, many studies have shown that solar geoengineering is more effective at offsetting global-mean  
 238 precipitation than global-mean temperature. Tilmes et al. (2013) find that compared to the control the GeoMIP  
 239 ensemble mean showed a 6.9% increase in global-mean precipitation in 4xCO<sub>2</sub> and a 4.5% reduction in G1, taking  
 240 these numbers we find an efficacy of 165%, that is whilst 100% of the global-mean temperature response has been  
 241 offset, 165% of the global precipitation response has been offset. When comparing the global-mean temperature and  
 242 local-mean temperature efficacies we find if 100% of the global-mean temperature has been offset, 90% of the  
 243 Greenland mean temperature has been offset (90% efficacy relative to global temperature) and if 100% of the  
 244 Greenland-mean temperature has been offset 111% of the global-mean temperature has been offset (111% efficacy  
 245 relative to local temperature).



246  
 247 Figure 1. Regional-mean anomalies (left) and efficacies (right) of G1\* and G1-Greenland at offsetting 4xCO<sub>2</sub> –  
 248 Control regional-mean anomalies for Greenland for each model within the GeoMIP G1-ensemble. On the left panel,  
 249 the upper points show the 4xCO<sub>2</sub> – Control anomaly, the middle row of points show the G1\* results which restore  
 250 global mean temperature, and the lower points show the results for G1-Greenland which restores local temperature.  
 251 The ensemble median is shown with a plus symbol. The results from some outlier points have been displayed as text  
 252 in the colour of the corresponding model. SFC\_heat is the net heat flux into the surface, i.e. net SW + net LW –  
 253 sensible heat – latent heat, and SFC\_rad is the net radiative flux into the surface, i.e. net SW + net LW. Efficacy is  
 254 defined in the text. Where data was unavailable these models have not been plotted for those variables.

255 In Greenland (Figure 1), G1\* offsets most of the effects of 4xCO<sub>2</sub>, bringing climate much closer to the control  
 256 conditions with a median efficacy that is within 10% of 100%. However, this result is a combination of G1\* being  
 257 under-effective at offsetting local temperatures, offsetting 90% of the annual-mean and 91% of the summer-mean,  
 258 and being over-effective at offsetting the other fields relative to local temperatures, as seen in G1-Greenland results.  
 259 There is a wide range of annual-mean precipitation responses across the ensemble in G1\* but the ensemble median  
 260 is close to 100%, i.e. the substantial increase in precipitation in 4xCO<sub>2</sub> has been offset. The global-mean  
 261 hydrological cycle has been weakened substantially but it seems local temperatures have been the dominant driver  
 262 of the local hydrological response. The ensemble median shows a large increase in net downward surface radiation  
 263 and surface heat flux, of greater than 10 Wm<sup>-2</sup> for the 4xCO<sub>2</sub> – control anomaly, though some models show  
 264 considerably larger changes. Relative to local temperature change, solar geoengineering is over-effective at

265 offsetting these changes in all models, with the ensemble median offsetting 116% of the net downward surface  
 266 radiation and 111% of the net downward surface heat flux increases that were seen in 4xCO<sub>2</sub>. These results suggest  
 267 that positive degree day melt schemes which do not account for these radiation and energy flux changes could  
 268 under-estimate the effectiveness of solar geoengineering at offsetting melt in Greenland by approximately 10%.



269

270 Figure 2. As Figure 1 but for Antarctica and Antarctic summer.

271 In Antarctica (Figure 2), A similar picture emerges as for Greenland with G1\* being under-effective at offsetting  
 272 local temperatures, but, relative to local temperature change being over-effective at offsetting the other fields.  
 273 However, the implications of these results are different as melt plays only a small role in Antarctic surface mass  
 274 balance, with accumulation dominating and with the surface mass balance contribution of Antarctica to future sea-  
 275 level rise projected to remain negative for the foreseeable future. Ligtenberg et al. (2013) predict an increase of  
 276 Antarctic surface mass balance of 98 Gt year<sup>-1</sup> K<sup>-1</sup> using the RACMO2 model and Lenaerts et al. (2016) predict an  
 277 increase of 70 Gt year<sup>-1</sup> K<sup>-1</sup> using the CESM model. The ensemble median precipitation response is close to control  
 278 values in the G1\* experiment, though there is substantial model spread, which suggests that regional temperatures  
 279 dominate the Antarctic hydrological response rather than the state of the global hydrological cycle which is  
 280 significantly weaker in G1\*. These results suggest that the negative contribution to sea-level rise of the positive  
 281 surface mass balance response of Antarctica to global warming would decline roughly in line with temperatures if  
 282 solar geoengineering were deployed though more work is needed to explore this issue.

283 This simple assessment supports the view that solar geoengineering would have a greater potential to reduce surface  
284 melt, and hence the sea-level rise contribution from surface mass balance changes of glaciers and the ice-sheets, than  
285 previous studies have suggested. However, several factors would need to be accounted for in future work to make a  
286 robust estimate of the efficacy of solar geoengineering at offsetting surface melt. Firstly, the impacts of a reduction  
287 in incoming sunlight will be greater where the albedo of ice is lowest. A large and growing fraction of the ablation  
288 zone of Greenland in summer is darkened by distributed surface impurities and snow algae revealed when the snow  
289 layer is melted, these darkened areas typically have an albedo half that of clean ice (Ryan et al., 2018). The impact  
290 of reduced sunlight will also be greater in low-latitude regions where the shortwave flux makes up a greater fraction  
291 of the total contribution to the surface energy flux, e.g. in High Mountain Asia. For tropical and mid-latitude  
292 glaciers, changes in accumulation due to changes in precipitation will also be an important factor to consider.

293 The results described here apply to a uniform reduction in incoming sunlight but the response to other, more realistic  
294 forms of solar geoengineering could be tailored to produce different outcomes. For example, whilst a uniform  
295 reduction in incoming sunlight would not offset all warming at high latitudes, stratospheric aerosol geoengineering  
296 could be deployed to produce a thicker aerosol cloud at high latitudes to reduce high latitude temperatures in line  
297 with global mean temperatures or to cool them further (Dai Z. et al., 2018; Kravitz Ben et al., 2018). However, it is  
298 important to note that the effects of solar geoengineering cannot be limited to the area of application and there would  
299 be remote impacts even if stratospheric aerosol geoengineering was limited just to polar regions (Robock et al.,  
300 2008)

### 301 **3.3. Ice-shelf collapse and dynamic mass loss**

302 The other mechanism by which ice-sheets lose mass is by calving icebergs from marine-terminating glaciers and  
303 here the effects of solar geoengineering are harder to anticipate. The rate of rate of discharge depends on how fast  
304 the ice flows across the grounding line. The rate of ice flow depends on several factors that are affected by changes  
305 in climate. Warmer ice is less viscous, allowing it to flow faster, though this is changing only very slowly and is  
306 negligible for the ice sheets on centennial time scales (Slangen et al. 2016). Increased melt-water can penetrate to  
307 the bed of the glacier and lubricate it, which may speed up the flow, although this “Zwally effect” seems not  
308 especially important in Greenland where surface melt waters are efficiently drained in channelized drainage systems  
309 such that changes in surface runoff have little impact on basal friction (Fleurian et al., 2016), and in Antarctica  
310 surface melt is not as yet significant in fast-flowing glaciers (Joughin et al., 2009). For Antarctica where ice  
311 discharge is the dominant loss mechanism, the most significant effect of climate change is to thin and weaken ice-  
312 shelves which provide a buttressing effect, pushing back against the glaciers slowing their flow into the ocean.  
313 Antarctica is so cold that little surface melt occurs on the ice-shelves, however relatively warm waters have been  
314 observed penetrating below the ice shelves, melting them from below (Pritchard et al., 2012). The water mass  
315 responsible for this melt is not the surface water around Antarctica, but rather the circumpolar deep waters  
316 (originating around 500 m below the surface) that surround Antarctica. Surface winds have acted to pump this  
317 relatively warm circumpolar deep water up and into the ice-shelf cavities. Here this relatively warm water can reach  
318 the grounding line where the ice starts to float and where pressure requires the ice to have the lowest melting point  
319 temperature. This ocean-driven melt has been observed to be thinning ice shelves, at rates as large as 50 m per year  
320 at the grounding line and as high as 14 m per year averaged over the some of the larger ice shelves (Rintoul et al.,  
321 2016), weakening their buttressing effect and increasing the rate of discharge of glaciers into the ocean (Favier et al.,  
322 2014). It is generally believed that the fate of the ice-shelves is likely to be determined by the degree to which this  
323 circumpolar deep water is able to penetrate into the deep ice shelf cavities rather than by surface melt (Liu et al.,  
324 2015; Pritchard et al., 2012).

325 A recent study (DeConto and Pollard, 2016), has challenged this view suggesting that the atmospheric warming that  
326 led to the break-up of some Antarctic Peninsula ice shelves would, if the warming continued, destabilize the larger  
327 southern ice shelves in the future. The process is through the hydrostatic head of melt-water filled crevasses which  
328 results in “hydrofracture” and the rapid disintegration of the ice shelf (Scambos et al., 2013). Furthermore, they

329 suggest that once large ice shelves begin to retreat, the large unstable ice cliffs formed could promote further rapid  
330 retreat, in a process dubbed marine ice-cliff instability (Pollard et al., 2015). Together these processes combined to  
331 produce a substantially greater Antarctic contribution to sea-level rise than seen in earlier studies which did not  
332 account for these highly uncertain processes (DeConto and Pollard, 2016).

333 Climate change and solar geoengineering will affect the ice-shelves, and hence the rate of discharge of marine  
334 glaciers, primarily by changing surface air temperature and wind patterns that affect the upwelling of circumpolar  
335 deep water. Solar geoengineering could lower surface air temperatures and hence reduce the likelihood of surface-  
336 melt-induced hydrofracturing of the ice-shelves as assessed by DeConto and Pollard (2016). Whilst solar  
337 geoengineering could lower surface air temperatures and surface ocean temperatures around Antarctica this would  
338 have limited impact on the temperature of the deep circumpolar water mass responsible for thinning the ice-shelves  
339 in the near-term as it is deep below the surface. As noted above, ocean-driven melt is primarily controlled by the  
340 upwelling of these deep waters which is driven by Southern Ocean winds. A recent study of the effects of  
341 stratospheric sulphate aerosol geoengineering in a scenario of future GHG emissions found that it would warm the  
342 stratosphere, changing both atmospheric and oceanic circulation patterns (McCusker et al., 2015). They simulated a  
343 greater upwelling of circumpolar deep-water relative to a scenario without an increase in GHG forcing, but that  
344 ocean temperatures were significantly lower than in the GHG only scenario. If this result proves robust then it  
345 suggests that whilst stratospheric aerosol geoengineering—or at least geoengineering using aerosols like sulfates  
346 which strongly alter stratospheric heating rates—could lower surface melt considerably it may have a limited ability  
347 to reduce ice shelf basal melt rates.

348 The dynamical response of marine glacier ice flow to changes in the buttressing effect of ice shelves is not simple  
349 and there is the potential for runaway responses which would limit solar geoengineering's potential to slow or  
350 reverse this contribution to sea-level rise. Fürst et al. (2016) show that ice shelves in the West Antarctic Amundsen  
351 and Bellingshausen seas are extremely sensitive to calving, meaning that even small amount of increased calving  
352 will trigger dynamical responses in the feeding ice streams increasing their flow rate. Furthermore, West  
353 Antarctica's geography makes its ice sheet especially vulnerable to such changes. Much of the ice sheet rests on  
354 bed-rock below sea-level which gets deeper further from the coast. This arrangement makes many of Antarctica's  
355 glaciers susceptible to "marine-ice sheet instability" (Mercer, 1978), in that if the boundary layer begins to retreat,  
356 the ice flow across the grounding line increases, prompting a self-sustaining retreat that would continue until a  
357 bedrock ridge further inland. In fact, observations suggest that recent increases in the temperature of water around  
358 Antarctica may have already triggered a process that will lead to the collapse of the Pine island and Thwaites  
359 glaciers (Favier et al., 2014; Joughin et al., 2014). Unless an ice stream has exceptionally strong lateral buttressing  
360 (Robel et al., 2016), a marine ice sheet instability, once started, may only be stopped by modifying bathymetry to  
361 provide extra buttressing, as simulated by flow-band modeling on Thwaites glacier (Wolovick and Moore, 2018).  
362 However, initial results from the BISICLES model evaluating the response of an idealized vulnerable marine glacier  
363 to imposed warming found that returning [the entire water column](#) to cooler conditions reversed the retreat that had  
364 begun during the warming (Asay-Davis et al., 2016). It seems reasonable to expect that solar geoengineering, [like](#)  
365 [emissions cuts](#), may help to prevent other marine glaciers from becoming unstable by limiting surface melt that  
366 could lead to ice-shelf collapse [but would have a limited ability to reverse sub-surface warming on decadal](#)  
367 [timescales \(as emissions cuts would\)](#). It may be that significant losses from some West Antarctic glaciers are  
368 unavoidable by simply returning climate and oceanic driving conditions to the pre-industrial and perhaps that even  
369 doing so would not be sufficient to arrest the retreat.

#### 370 4. Recommendations for research

371 In this study we've reviewed the literature on the effects of solar geoengineering on sea-level rise and highlighted  
372 several gaps and shortcomings in the approaches used to date. We've also highlighted important differences between  
373 a reduction in GHG forcing and solar geoengineering that will affect the surface mass balance of glaciers and ocean-

374 driven melt of ice-shelves and so the discharge rate of marine glaciers. We conclude with specific research  
375 recommendations that will help to address the key questions we've highlighted earlier: Would solar geoengineering  
376 be more, or less, effective at offsetting sea-level rise than an equivalent reduction in GHG forcing? And what are the  
377 limits to solar geoengineering's potential to reduce or reverse sea-level rise?

378 4.1. Evaluate the sea-level rise response to scenarios of solar geoengineering deployment alongside other scenarios  
379 of future climate change

380 Many of the new Earth System Models taking part in CMIP6 include coupled ice-sheet model components and are  
381 ideal for making an initial assessment of the questions we have raised. The Ice-Sheet Model Intercomparison Project  
382 phase 6 (ISMIP6) aims to evaluate the ice-sheet response of coupled ice-sheet models to idealized and future  
383 emissions scenarios (Goelzer et al., 2018). The future emission scenario chosen by this project is the business-as-  
384 usual SSP5-8.5 scenario (which reaches  $8.5 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$  by 2100) which is also the basis for the GeoMIP6 G6 experiment  
385 where the radiative forcing is reduced to match the SSP4-6.0 scenario ( $6.0 \text{ Wm}^{-2}$  by 2100) out to 2100. We  
386 recommend that groups participating in both ISMIP6 and GeoMIP6 take this opportunity to extend the ISMIP6  
387 protocol to the GeoMIP G6 experiment, i.e. producing a run including the coupled ice-sheet model and running an  
388 offline ice-sheet model, to explore the effects of solar geoengineering on sea-level. To evaluate the relative efficacy  
389 of solar geoengineering these results could be compared to the coupled ice-sheet model response to the SSP4-6.0  
390 scenario which has a reduction in GHG forcing equivalent to that offset by stratospheric aerosol geoengineering in  
391 GeoMIP6 G6.

392 Insight into the limits of solar geoengineering as a means of reducing sea-level rise can also be gained by extending  
393 the idealized simulations studied in ISMIP6. ISMIP6 also focuses on an idealized simulation in which  $\text{CO}_2$   
394 concentrations rise at 1% per year until  $4\times\text{CO}_2$  is reached (after 140 years), we recommend extending this protocol  
395 by fixing  $\text{CO}_2$  concentrations at  $4\times\text{CO}_2$  values thereafter but also lowering the solar constant at such a rate that  
396 global-mean temperatures are restored to control conditions after 140 years. We note that the Carbon Dioxide  
397 Removal MIP also includes a similar experiment which reduces  $\text{CO}_2$  concentrations at the same rate that they were  
398 raised and would be an interesting target for study (Keller et al., 2018). These idealized ramp-up, ramp-down  
399 scenarios would provide a solid basis for evaluating the potential of solar geoengineering, and carbon dioxide  
400 removal, to reverse sea-level rise, showing the extent to which hysteresis and threshold behaviors would limit this  
401 potential. Furthermore, a comparison between the solar constant and  $\text{CO}_2$  ramp-down scenarios would allow an  
402 evaluation of whether solar geoengineering would be more or less effective at reversing sea-level rise.

403 4.2. Evaluate the surface mass balance response to solar geoengineering using dedicated regional surface mass  
404 balance models

405 As we show above, there are good theoretical reasons and now some limited model evidence to support the view  
406 that solar geoengineering would be more effective than an equivalent reduction in GHG forcing. However, there are  
407 several unknowns that preclude making any quantitative statements about this effect. For example, the steep  
408 orography of the ablation zone will not be well-captured in coarse models, changes in surface albedo due to  
409 impurities may not be well captured, and regional biases in climate can have a significant impact on results. We  
410 therefore recommend that the analysis of the coupled ice-sheet models recommended above be complemented by  
411 simulations with dedicated regional surface mass balance models. As noted above, a comparison between the  
412 surface mass balance in the GeoMIP G6 and SSP4-6.0 scenarios would allow a quantification of the relative efficacy  
413 of solar geoengineering at offsetting the reduction in surface mass balance in a warmer world.

414 4.3. Evaluate the effect of solar geoengineering on the upwelling of Antarctic Circumpolar Deep Water and on the  
415 stability of the ice-shelves and marine glaciers.

416 The study of McCusker et al. (2015) suggests that stratospheric aerosol geoengineering may promote upwelling as  
417 changes in stratospheric circulation could propagate downwards to change surface winds around Antarctica. If this is  
418 the case, stratospheric aerosol geoengineering could be significantly less effective than a reduction in GHG forcing  
419 at offsetting the increased upwelling of circumpolar deep water around Antarctica. Future work should investigate  
420 whether this result is robust across the ensemble of models running the GeoMIP6 G6 stratospheric aerosol  
421 experiment. In addition, as the climate response to stratospheric aerosols depends strongly on the type of aerosol  
422 released and the distribution of the aerosols (Dykema et al., 2016), whether it may be possible to avoid unfavorable  
423 wind patterns by deploying stratospheric aerosol geoengineering differently should be explored in further climate  
424 model simulations.

#### 425 4.4. Evaluate sea-level rise risks as part of an interdisciplinary evaluation of solar geoengineering

426 Sea-level rise is one of the key risks of climate change and so it will be important to understand the potential  
427 efficacy and the limits of solar geoengineering as a means of reducing sea-level rise, however sea level rise is only  
428 one of many issues that must be considered when discussing solar geoengineering. There are likely good reasons not  
429 to deploy solar geoengineering with the objective of halting or reversing sea-level rise as this seems likely to require  
430 a substantial reduction in global temperatures which could result in potentially harmful shifts in regional climate and  
431 significant non-climatic side-effects (Irvine et al., 2012). Furthermore, whilst an understanding of the potential  
432 physical consequences of climate change and solar geoengineering is necessary for a discussion of the potential use  
433 of solar geoengineering, it is not sufficient. Whether and how to deploy solar geoengineering is a question that  
434 demands a nuanced discussion encompassing not only the physical consequences of deployment but also a careful  
435 consideration and negotiation of the complex socio-political issues it raises. A good understanding of the potential  
436 and limits of solar geoengineering to reduce sea-level rise will be an important part of the foundation of this much  
437 broader discussion which we hope the cryosphere research community will engage.

438

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