Rereading the IPCC Report: Aerosols, Droughts & El Niño / ENSO

A17

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1. Abstract

The IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (Technical Summary p 35) states that "changes in aerosols may have affected precipitation and other aspects of the hydrologic cycle more strongly than other anthropogenic forcing agents" and that "Simulations also suggest that absorbing aerosols, particularly black carbon, can reduce the solar radiation reaching the surface and can warm the atmosphere at regional scales, affecting the vertical temperature profile and the large-scale atmospheric circulation".

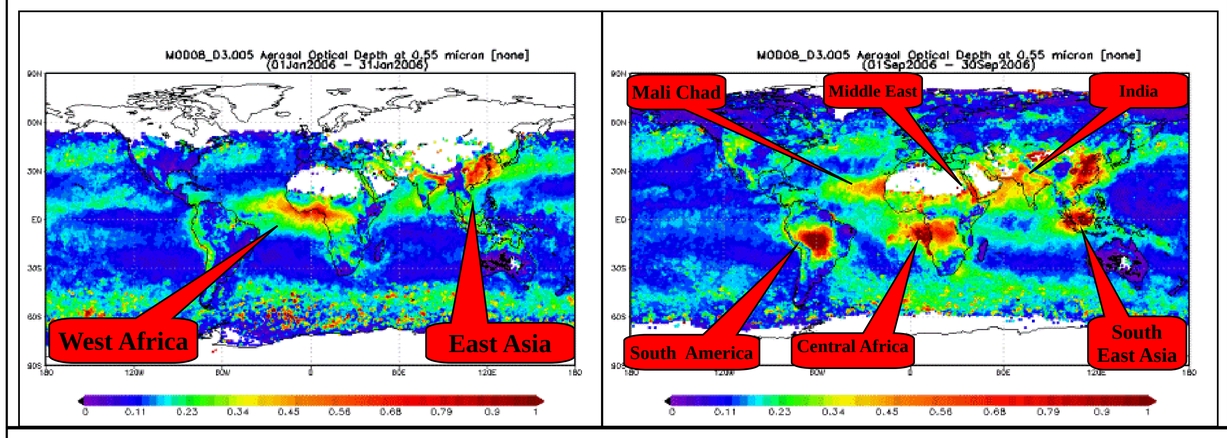
I show that eight seasonal, anthropogenic, continental scale, aerosol plumes now occur each year varying significantly in extent and optical depth inter annually. I also show that: the aerosol optical depth of the South East Asian Plume, occurring from late July to November, correlates with four characteristics of drought in south eastern Australia and the volume of tephra ejected by volcanoes in south east Asia correlates: negatively with rainfall in Australia and water inflows into the Murray River; and positively with ENSO events over the period 1890/91 to 2006.

I conclude that aerosol plumes over south eastern Asia are the cause of drought in south eastern Australia and El Niño/ENSO events. I propose a new component of surface aerosol radiative forcing, Regional Dimming, which interferes with the seasonal movement of the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone and forces the regional Hadley Cells into anomalous positions producing blocking high pressure systems in the higher latitudes and causing climate change by altering the wind systems. The South East Asian Plume also creates El Niño/ENSO events by altering the circulation of the Walker Cell which changes the MSL pressure relationship between Darwin and Tahiti creating Southern Oscillation Index events and reduces the wind speed in the central Pacific Ocean causing an increase in the sea surface temperatures in the Nino 3.4 area.

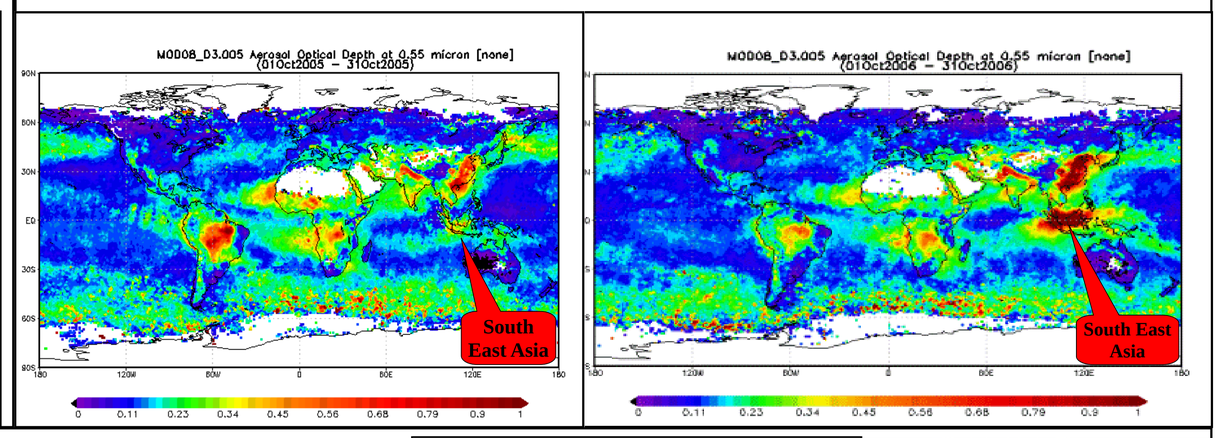
2. Conclusions

1. **Aerosol plumes, as suggested by the IPCC AR4 report and the U.S. Climate Change Science Program report (Sept 2008), do have a significant effect on the atmospheric circulation, hydrologic cycle and global climate.**
2. **Droughts in south eastern Australia are caused by anthropogenic and natural aerosol plumes which form the South East Asian Plume in the green area shown in section 5 below.**
3. **El Niño / ENSO events are caused by the South East Asian Plume which has both anthropogenic and natural (volcanic) origins.**
4. **Due to the correlation of El Niño /ENSO events with VEI to Tephra from volcanic eruptions the five possible causal relationships of two correlated events A and B which are : (1) A causes B; (2) B causes A; (3) C, another event, causes A and B simultaneously; (4) It's a coincidence; and (5) the relationship is complex including feedback are reduced to (1) and (4) as deep earth processes cause volcanic eruptions and (2), (3) and (5) are clearly logically impossible. Then with correlation magnitudes over 0.9 effectively eliminating the possibility of coincidence the only logical conclusion which can be made is that volcanic tephra in the green area shown in section 5 below caused the El Niño / ENSO events.**

3. The Eight Continental Scale Aerosol Plumes (2006)



4. Inter-Annual Variation - 2005 & 2006 South East Asian Plume Oct



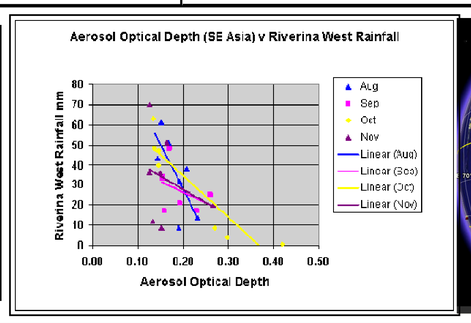
5. Drought - South Eastern Australia - Recent

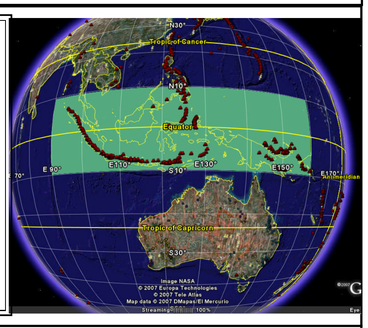
The Aerosol Optical Depth (AOD) in the Green Area, Lat 10S to 10N and Long 90 to 160E, in the Google Earth image was correlated with:

- Rainfall in Riverina West Rainfall District (RWRD) in south eastern Australia
- Dew point (as a humidity proxy) in Swan Hill on the south west boundary of the RWRD
- Mean Sea Level (MSL) Pressure in Melbourne in south eastern Australia
- Sea Surface Temperature (SST) in the Green Area

for the years 2000 to 2006 and the results are shown in the table where the cell shade indicates significance (Yellow < 0.01 Green < 0.05). The largest correlations appear in October when the anthropogenic South East Asian Plume reaches its greatest extent & AOD.

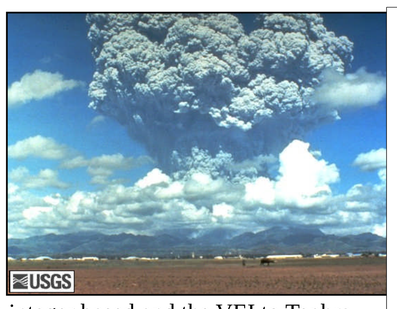
	SST in the Area	RWRD Rainfall	Swan Hill Dew Point	Melbourne MSL Pressure
Aug	-0.44	-0.72	-0.82	0.21
Sep	-0.68	-0.39	-0.89	0.31
Oct	-0.89	-0.92	-0.92	0.84
Nov	-0.94	-0.30	-0.54	0.12

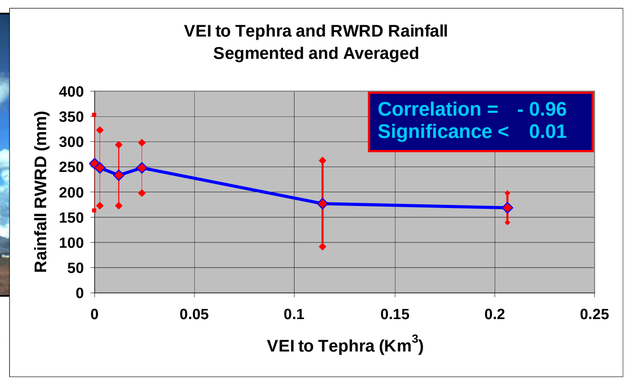


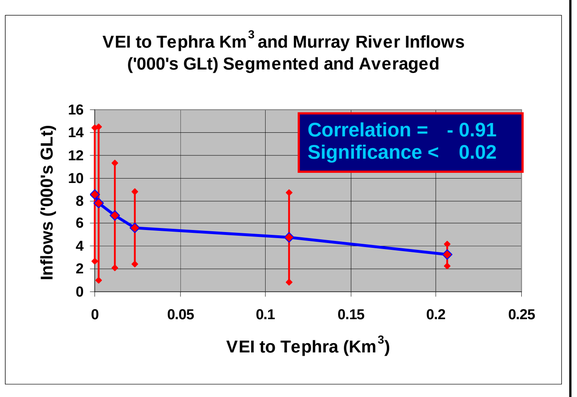


6. Drought - South Eastern Australia - Historic

Accepting that the anthropogenic South East Asian Aerosol Plume in the green area has caused recent droughts in Australia from August to November, the question of what caused historic droughts in Australia becomes what could have caused similar aerosol plumes? The answer is, of course, volcanoes. The green area shown above includes the volcano overlay from the Global Volcanism Program (GVP) at the Smithsonian Institution. Each red triangle is one or, at this scale, several volcanoes. The GVP provided a database of all volcanic eruptions since 1800 which demonstrates that the green area hosted 17% of all eruptions in 3% of the global surface. The database provides the Volcanic Explosivity Index (VEI) of the majority of eruptions and this VEI was converted to tephra volume using data from the GVP website. The VEI data is integer based and the VEI to Tephra data falls naturally into segments. As the VEI data are "estimates" the data is very noisy. To reduce the noise the segments were averaged for both VEI to Tephra and rainfall/river inflows for the months April to October, the southern wet season in Australia, and then plotted and correlated. The results are shown with error bars ± 1 std deviation



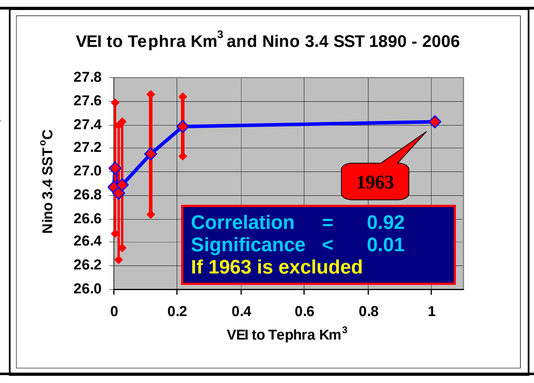


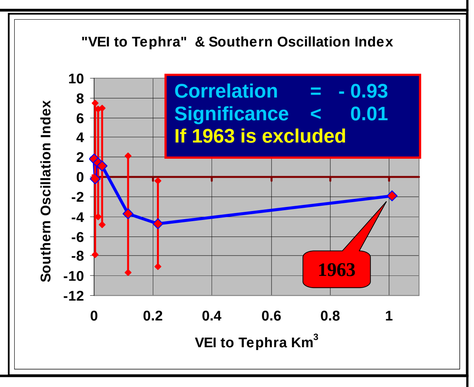


7. El Niño / ENSO Events

It is well known that drought in Australia correlates with El Niño / ENSO events, and having established that drought in Australia is caused by anthropogenic and natural aerosol plumes in the green area shown in panel 5, it is no surprise to find that the VEI to Tephra data correlates with the Sea Surface Temperature (SST) in the Nino 3.4 area and with the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI).

The annually averaged VEI to Tephra data was segmented and averaged and then correlated with the annual average SST in the Niño 3.4 area and the annual average SOI for the period 1890 / 91 to 2006. 1963 data was excluded from the correlation due to the volume of tephra (1Km^3) which was ejected in one eruption by the volcano Agung that year being nearly an order of magnitude greater than any other year.





8. Regional Dimming Model

Continental scale, optically dense aerosol plumes in the tropics interfere with the seasonal movement of the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ). Depending on their optical depth, size, season and location, such plumes may either split the ITCZ into northern and southern components separated by many degrees of latitude or stop the seasonal movement of the ITCZ. These effects move the southern and northern Hadley Cells and consequently the entire atmospheric circulation system in the region of the aerosol plume into abnormal seasonal positions. This causes significant climate change near the longitudes of the plume in the tropics, by modifying the local wind systems. In the higher latitude regions remote from the aerosol plume the plume creates a persistent, blocking, high pressure system as an abnormal extension of the Hadley Cell and can also, in some regions such as Australia, reduce the amount of water vapour in the atmosphere in the higher latitudes by cooling the sea surface in the tropics. If the aerosol plume extends beyond the tropics, one component of the ITCZ may even be forced outside the tropics resulting in extremely anomalous conditions in the higher latitudes. The South East Asian Plume, by interfering with the movement of the ITCZ and Hadley Cells, also affects the circulation of the Walker Cell and causes El Niño/SOI or ENSO events.

It should be noted here that aerosol plumes have an immediate effect on the atmospheric circulation system. When the South East Asian Plume appears the surface immediately cools and the rising air, which drives the Walker and Hadley Cells, fails in the area of the plume resulting in a split ITCZ, Hadley Cells in anomalous seasonal positions creating blocking high pressure systems in the higher latitudes, and suppressed Walker Cell circulation……

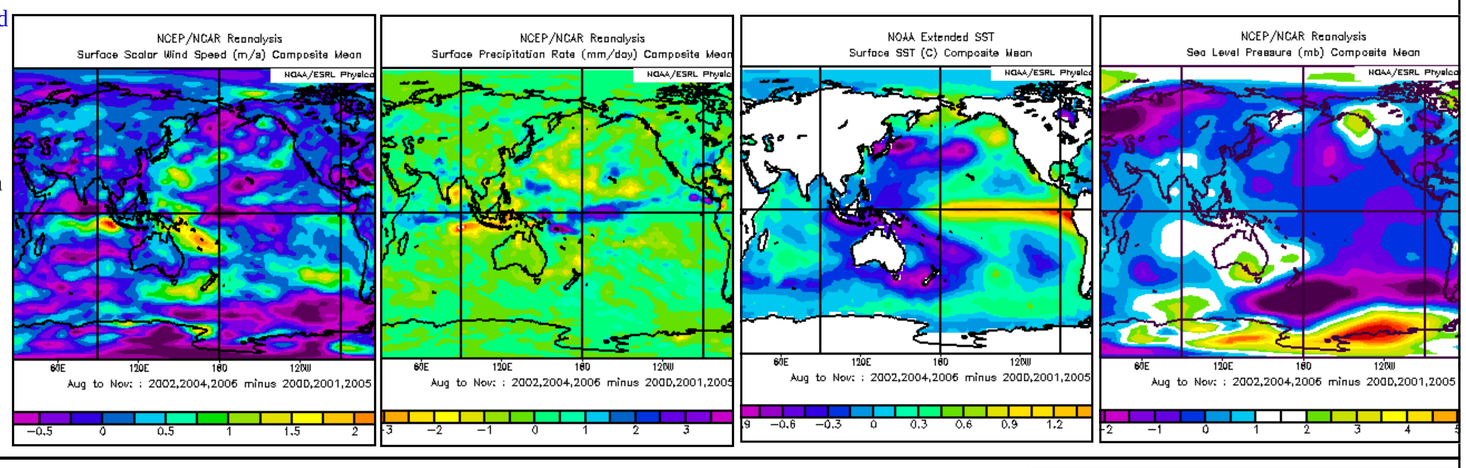
And all in a few, very few, days.

9. NCEP / NCAR Climate Reanalysis Showing El Niño / ENSO effects of the South East Asian Plume

The four panels show the anomalies caused by the anthropogenic South East Asian Plume averaged over Aug to Nov in 2002, 2004 and 2006. From left to right:

- **Wind Speed** - Reduced wind speed (central Pacific & SE Australia) and increased wind speed south of Tasmania and over New Zealand
- **Rainfall** - Reduced rainfall over most of Australia and increased over Central America
- **SST** - Classic El Niño SST warm tongue over the central and eastern Pacific Ocean
- **MSL pressure** - Higher over Australia and lower over the eastern Pacific giving a negative Southern Oscillation Index

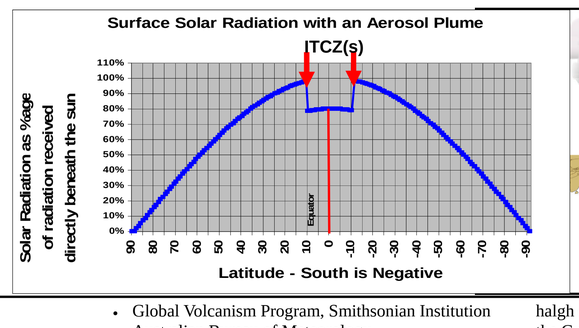
The panels were constructed by summing the months of August to November in three years of highest AOD (2002, 2004 and 2006) of the anthropogenic South East Asian Plume using the "Green Area" in October and subtracting the months August to November for the three years of lowest AOD in October (2000, 2001 and 2005) to show the anomalies caused by the high AOD of the South East Asian Plume. Data was sourced from the NCEP/NCAR climate reanalysis at www.cdc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/Composites/printpage.pl

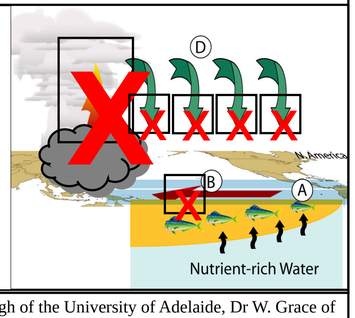


10. Walker and Hadley Circulation

The Walker Cell rotates over the Pacific Ocean, driven by the surface heat from solar radiation over the western Pacific Ocean/South East Asia which warms the air causing it to rise. The right image below shows a NOAA diagram modified with an aerosol plume over south east Asia. The plume stabilises the atmosphere in the region with the top of the plume being warmer than the lower atmosphere thus preventing the air from rising over south eastern Asia and switching off the Walker Cell.

The effect on the Hadley Cell is shown in the left diagram which shows the surface heat as a percentage of the heat received at the equator plotted against latitude, assuming the sun is over the equator with an aerosol plume which has a surface forcing effect of –20% extending from 10N to 10S latitude. This plume results in the highest solar surface heating occurring at the northern and southern edges of the plume and this forces the Hadley Cells to anomalous positions and creates blocking high pressure systems in the higher latitudes as anomalous extensions of the Hadley Cells.





11. Acknowledgements

Data and information was sourced from:

- NASA: Analyses and visualizations used in this poster were produced with the Giovanni online data system, developed and maintained by the NASA Goddard Earth Sciences (GES) Data and Information Services Center (DISC).
- NOAA
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- Google Earth
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