



Impacts of historical climate and land cover changes on ozone

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# Impacts of historical climate and land cover changes on tropospheric ozone air quality and public health in East Asia over 1980–2010

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## Abstract

Understanding how historical climate and land cover changes have affected tropospheric ozone in East Asia would help constrain the large uncertainties associated with future East Asian air quality projections. We perform a series of simulations using a global chemical transport model driven by assimilated meteorological data and a suite of land cover and land use data to examine the public health effects associated with changes in climate, land cover, land use, and anthropogenic emissions over the past 30 years (1980–2010) in East Asia. We find that over 1980–2010 land cover change alone could lead to a decrease in summertime surface ozone by up to 4 ppbv in East Asia and ~ 2000 fewer ozone-related premature deaths per year, driven mostly by enhanced dry deposition resulting from climate- and CO<sub>2</sub>-induced increase in vegetation density, which more than offsets the effect of reduced isoprene emission arising from cropland expansion. Over the same period, climate change alone could lead to an increase in summertime ozone by 2–10 ppbv in most regions of East Asia and ~ 6000 more premature deaths annually, mostly attributable to warming. The combined impacts (–2 to +12 ppbv) show that while the effect of climate change is more pronounced, land cover change could offset part of the climate effect and lead to a previously unknown public health benefit. While the changes in anthropogenic emissions remain the largest contributor to deteriorating ozone air quality in East Asia over the past 30 years, we show that climate change and land cover changes could lead to a substantial modification of ozone levels, and thus should come into consideration when formulating future air quality management strategies. We also show that the sensitivity of surface ozone to land cover change is more dependent on dry deposition than isoprene emission in most of East Asia, leading to ozone responses that are quite distinct from that in North America, where most ozone-vegetation sensitivity studies to date have been conducted.

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## 1 Introduction

Air pollution is one of the most pressing environmental and public health concerns facing us today especially in rapidly developing regions such as East Asia. Several projection studies have suggested the important roles of climate and land cover changes on future air quality in addition to changing anthropogenic emissions (Fiore et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2012; Tai et al., 2013), albeit great uncertainties not only in the projected emissions and land use, but also in the coupling between climate, atmospheric chemistry and the land cover. A better understanding of how all these factors have interacted in the past to shape air quality would be particularly useful to shed light on the likely course of atmospheric chemical evolution in the coming decades. The attribution of air quality trends and public health outcomes in East Asia, which has undergone enormous social and environmental changes over the past few decades, would also provide valuable insights for policy formulation.

One of the most important air pollutants is surface ozone ( $O_3$ ) due to its detrimental effects on human health, and its significance in changing the Earth's climate as a greenhouse gas has also been recognized (IPCC, 2013). Tropospheric ozone is produced by photochemical oxidation of precursor gases such as carbon monoxide, methane, and non-methane volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of nitrogen oxides ( $NO_x \equiv NO + NO_2$ ). Most of these precursor gases have large anthropogenic sources, but the natural biosphere also represents significant sources depending on the region. The single most important non-methane VOC is isoprene, emitted primarily by land vegetation. Isoprene acts as a precursor for ozone in polluted, high- $NO_x$  regions, but reduces ozone by ozonolysis or by sequestering  $NO_x$  as isoprene nitrate in remote, low- $NO_x$  regions. The major global sink for ozone is photolysis in the presence of water vapor, but dry deposition onto the leaf surfaces of vegetation also represents a dominant sink within the boundary layer. Surface ozone is thus dependent not only on anthropogenic emissions of precursors but also on vegetation characteristics and local chemical environments, all of which are influenced by meteorological conditions.

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ern Era Retrospective-analysis for Research and Applications (MERRA) (<http://gmao.gsfc.nasa.gov/merra/>) with a horizontal resolution of  $2.0^\circ$  latitude by  $2.5^\circ$  longitude and reduced vertical resolution of 47 levels. MERRA, produced by the NASA Goddard Earth Observing System (GEOS), focuses on historical analysis of the hydrological cycle on a broad range of timescales and covers the modern satellite era from 1979 to present. In this work, we conduct 5 year simulations in the historical (1981–1985) and present-day (2007–2011) periods using various combinations of MERRA and land cover data. GEOS-Chem performs fully coupled simulations of ozone–NO<sub>x</sub>–VOC–aerosol chemistry (Bey et al., 2001), and its ozone simulations over East Asia have been previously evaluated with measurements from surface sites (Wang et al., 2011; He et al., 2012) and satellites (Wang et al., 2013). These studies demonstrate the ability of GEOS-Chem to reasonably reproduce the magnitude and seasonal variation of surface ozone in the region.

Global anthropogenic emissions of CO, NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub> use the EDGAR3.2-FT-2000 global inventory for 2000 (Olivier et al., 2005), and that of non-methane VOCs use the RETRO monthly global inventory for 2000 (Schultz et al., 2008). Global ammonia emissions are from the GEIA inventory (Bouwman et al., 1997). These global inventories are then scaled to 2005 levels on the basis of economic data and energy statistics as described by van Donkelaar et al. (2008). In this study, anthropogenic emissions in Asia are from Streets et al. (2003, 2006) and are also scaled to 2005 levels. Biomass burning emissions are from the GFED-3 inventory (van der Werf et al., 2010).

Biogenic VOC emissions in GEOS–Chem are computed by the Model of Emissions of Gases and Aerosols from Nature (MEGAN) v2.1 (Guenther et al., 2006, 2012) but as implemented by Barkley et al. (2011). Emissions of VOC species, including isoprene, monoterpenes, methyl butenol, sesquiterpenes, acetone and various alkenes, are simulated as a function of PFT-specific emission factors modulated by environmental activity factors to account for changing temperature, light, leaf age and LAI. We use the empirical values of PFT-specific emission factors provided by Guenther et al. (2012) (Table S1 in the Supplement). Soil NO<sub>x</sub> emission follows Yienger and Levy (1995),





respectively, from the historical period. Results from these sensitivity simulations enable first-order estimates of the potential relative contribution from each of the variables considered.

### 3 Changes in land cover and land use over 1980–2010

5 The vegetation changes in terms of distribution and density over 1980–2010 in East Asia as a result of environmental and anthropogenic land use changes are shown in Fig. 1. We find that the cropland fraction in northeast and most of eastern China, Korea and various other places increases by up to 20 % from 1980 to 2010, often associated with deforestation. Significant cropland-to-grassland conversion and reforestation are  
10 observed in northern China (e.g., Inner Mongolia) and many parts of southwestern and southern China, likely due to the land use policies of the Chinese government such as the “Grain for Green” project (J. Liu et al., 2010). Forested areas have generally decreased where croplands have expanded, whereas reforestation in southwestern and southern China is associated with reduced coverage of all of croplands, grasslands and shrubs (Fig. 1a).

15 In summer (JJA), LAI values in most of East Asia have generally increased, except in some parts of Southeast Asia (Fig. 1b). The enhanced summertime LAI is likely a result of warming and CO<sub>2</sub> fertilization, which promotes plant growth as is shown by a number of vegetation modeling studies (Gonzales et al., 2008; Kaplan et al., 2012).  
20 The increase in summertime LAI despite significant cropland expansion in northeastern and eastern China suggests that increased foliage density of the remaining forests may have more than offset the impact of reduced forest coverage on the grid-cell scale. On the other hand, a decline in LAI is observed in most of East Asia in spring (MAM), encompassing northeastern and southern China, Korea, and Japan (Fig. 1b). Such  
25 a decline for 1981–2006 are also reported in S. Liu et al. (2010) and Sangram (2012), possibly due to the warming-induced drought stress, reduced springtime precipitation and/or changes in agricultural practices.

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investigate this further by considering the two important factors via which the land cover could influence ozone in the model – PFT fractional coverage (representing vegetation distribution) and LAI (representing vegetation density) – and comparing the results from [CTRL\_2010] with those from [SIM\_PFT] and [SIM\_LAI] to better understand the relative importance of these two vegetation parameters. Without LAI changes, changes in PFT distribution alone reduce JJA surface ozone by up to 4 ppbv in Japan, Korea, northeastern, eastern and southwestern China, and parts of Southeast Asia, whereas in southern and western China it increases by 0.5–2 ppbv (Fig. S3a). This indicates that cropland expansion might benefit public health in VOC-limited regions due to reduced isoprene emission, but might worsen ozone air quality in low-NO<sub>x</sub> regions due to reduced isoprene and increased soil NO<sub>x</sub> emissions (Fig. S3a). Afforestation would have the opposite effects. On the other hand, as a result of LAI changes alone, JJA ozone exhibits reduction by as much as 2 ppbv in most of China (except in southern China), primarily driven by increased dry deposition following increased JJA LAI, though in part offset by increased isoprene emission in VOC-limited regions (Fig. S3b). Enhanced LAI leads to higher ozone in southern China, which is the most isoprene-abundant (but still high-NO<sub>x</sub>) region of China. The LAI (density) effect generally dominates over the PFT (distribution) effect in East Asia.

## 5 Impacts of climate change alone on ozone air quality

Figure 4 shows the effects of 1980–2010 climate change alone on surface ozone ([CTRL]–[SIM\_CLIM]). Simulated surface ozone changes in summer are within the range of –2 to +12 ppbv over East Asia due to climate change alone, with the largest over Mongolia, eastern and northeastern China, representing significant “climate penalty” on ozone regulatory effort over 1980–2010 (Fig. 4a). In contrast, surface ozone decreases in some parts of western China by up to 2 ppbv. Surface ozone increases in spring by as much as 8 ppbv in southern and eastern China, but decreases

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China, respectively. Historical LCLU change (mainly via climate- and CO<sub>2</sub>-driven increase in vegetation density) causes ozone-related respiratory mortality to decrease by 2200 deathsyr<sup>-1</sup> in East Asia and by 243 deathsyr<sup>-1</sup> in China, reflecting the relatively small but not insignificant public health benefit of multidecadal LCLU change over the past 30 years due to the alleviation of ozone pollution that in part offsets the health damage of warming and increasing emissions.

## 8 Conclusions and discussion

In this study, we investigate the effects of historical (1980–2010) changes in climate, land cover and land use on surface ozone concentration in East Asia using the GEOS-Chem chemical transport model driven by assimilated meteorological fields, land use data from historical RCP harmonization, and several satellite-derived land cover products. We characterize the possible changes in vegetation distribution and density, as well as various climate variables, in East Asia over the past 30 years, and examine their influences on ozone air quality and public health along the backdrop of changing anthropogenic emissions, focusing on spring and summer when ozone pollution is usually the most serious. East Asian land cover change is generally characterized by a reduction in forest coverage (mostly due to cropland expansion) in most of southern, eastern and northeastern China and adjacent regions, but an increase in forest coverage in parts of northern, southwestern and western China. LAI has generally increased in summer likely due to warming and CO<sub>2</sub> fertilization, but decreased in spring.

From the simulations using different combinations of present-day (2007–2011) vs. historical (1981–1985) meteorological fields, land cover data and anthropogenic emissions of ozone precursors, we estimate that historical land cover and land use change alone over 1980–2010 could have led to reduced summertime surface ozone by up to 4 ppbv in most of East Asia, driven mainly by warming- and CO<sub>2</sub>-induced enhancement in summertime LAI, but enhanced springtime ozone by 0.5–2 ppbv in most of East Asia. Historical climate change alone has increased summertime surface ozone

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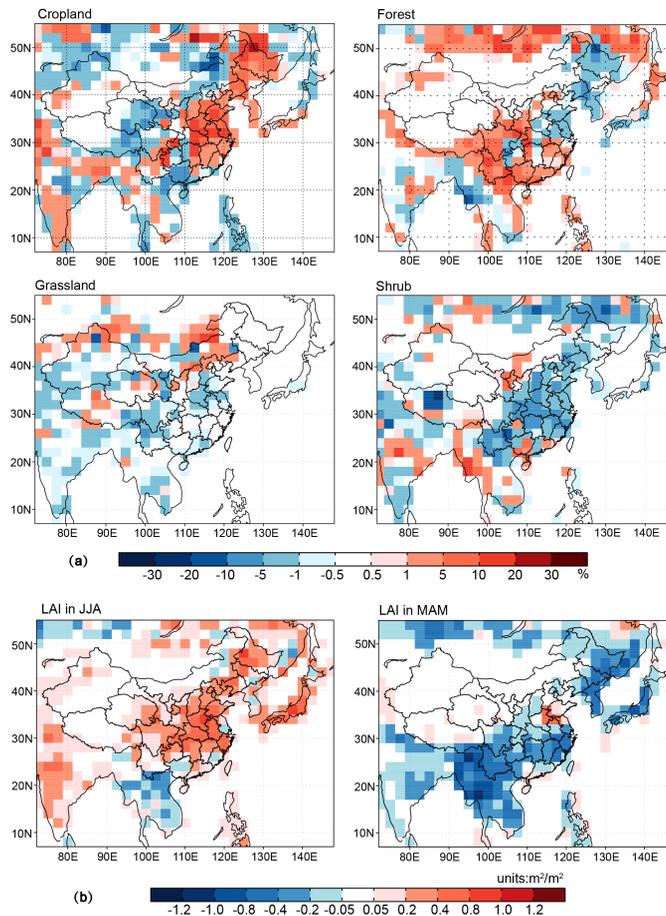
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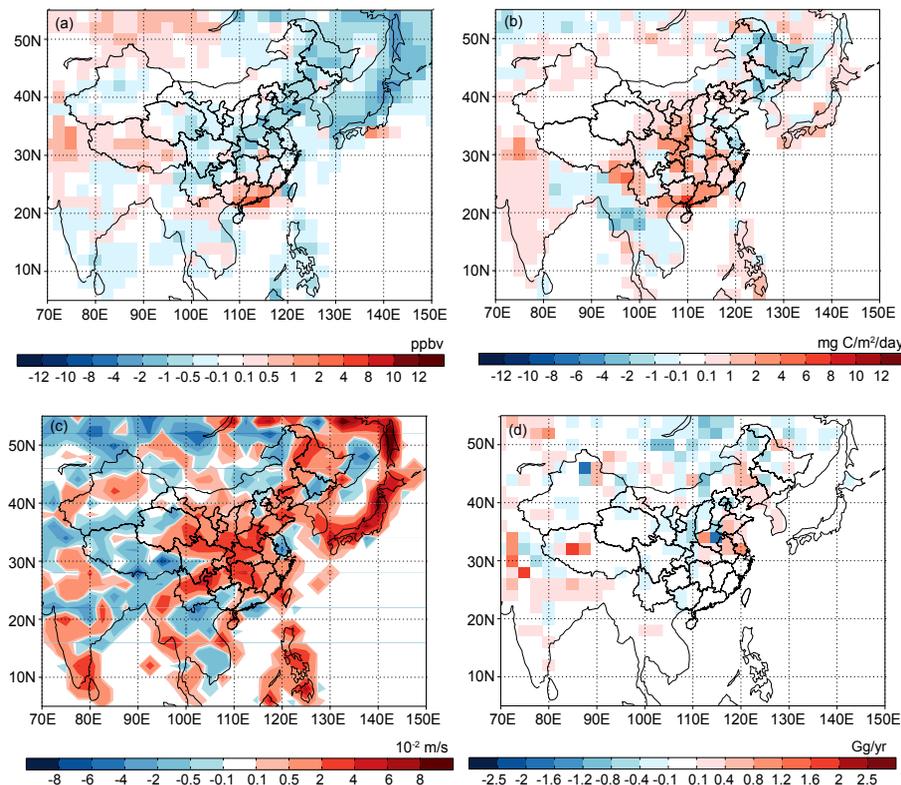
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**Figure 1.** (a) 1980–2010 changes in fractional coverage of croplands, forests (needle-leaf + broadleaf + mixed), grasslands and shrubs; (b) changes in summertime (JJA) and springtime (MAM) LAI over 1980–2010.

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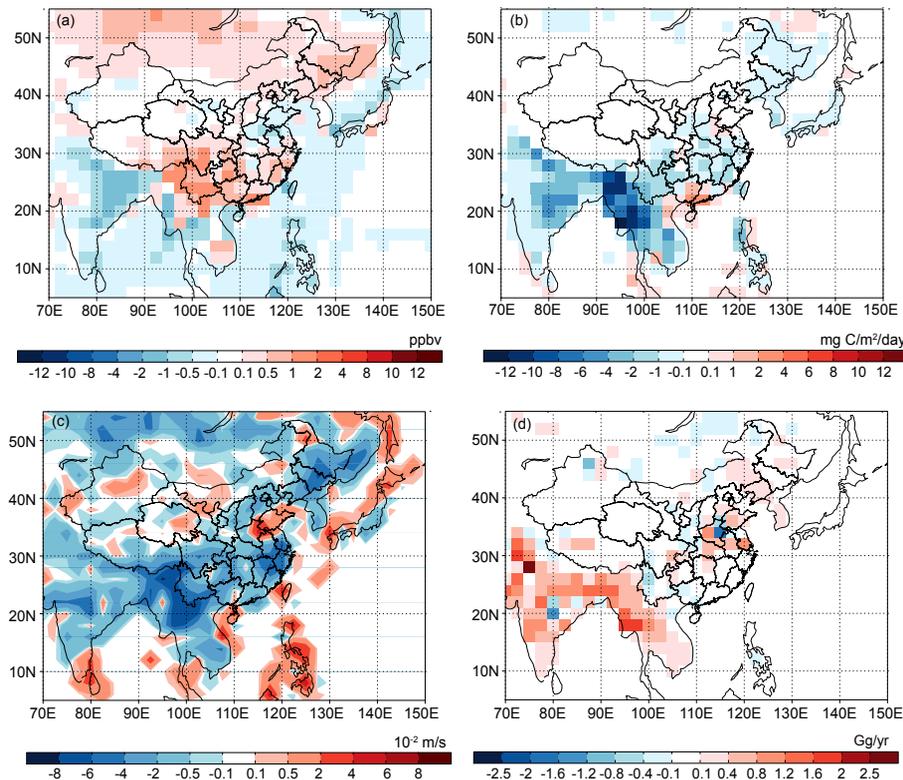


**Figure 2.** Changes in summertime (JJA) (a) surface maximum daily 8 h average ozone concentration (MDA8  $O_3$ ); (b) isoprene emission; (c) dry deposition velocity; and (d) soil  $NO_x$  emission, driven by 1980–2010 changes in land cover and land use alone ([CTRL]–[SIM\_LCLU]). Values are differences between the five-year averages over the present-day and historical periods.

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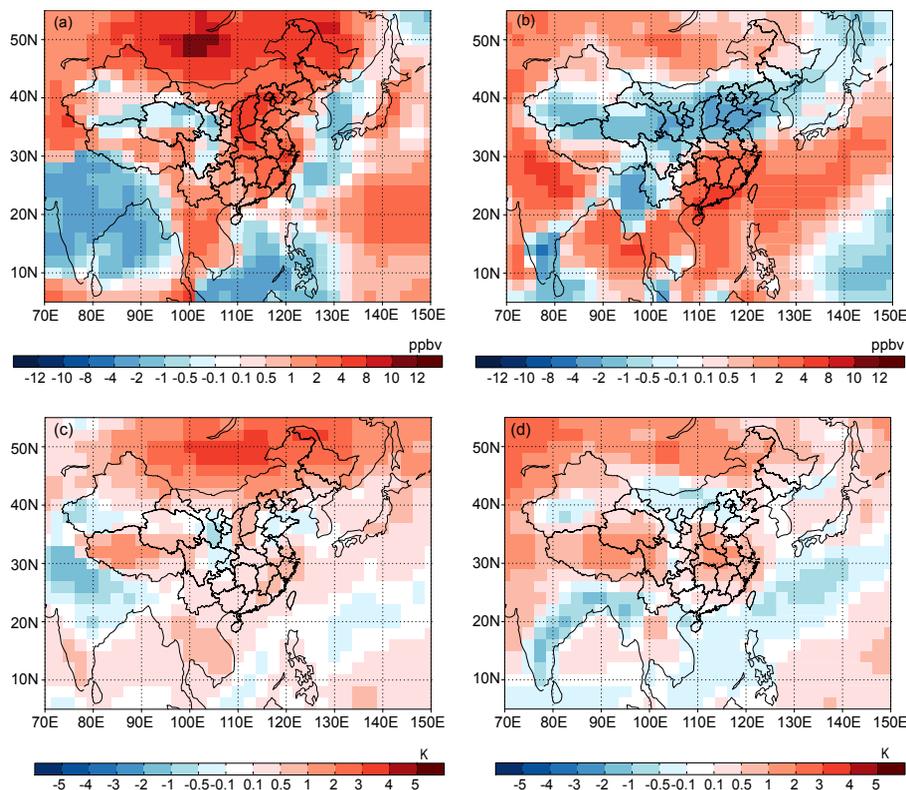


**Figure 3.** Changes in springtime (MAM) (a) surface maximum daily 8 h average ozone concentration (MDA8  $O_3$ ); (b) isoprene emission; (c) dry deposition velocity; and (d) soil  $NO_x$  emission driven by 1980–2010 changes in land cover and land use alone ([CTRL]–[SIM\_LCLU]). Values are differences between the five-year averages over the present-day and historical periods.

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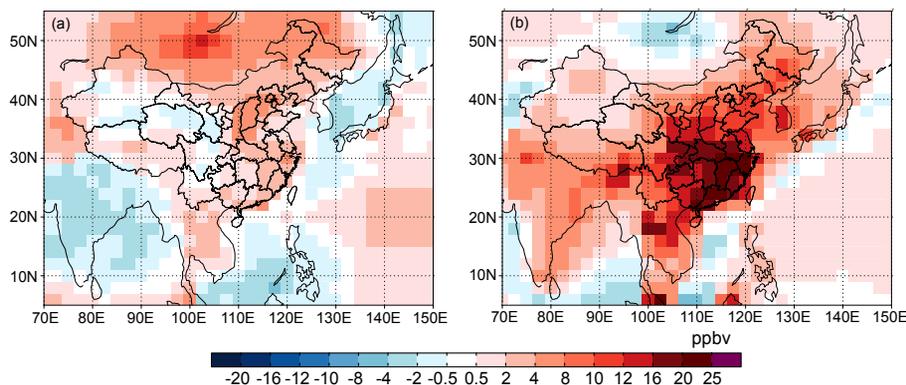


**Figure 4.** Changes in **(a)** surface maximum daily 8 h average ozone concentration (MDA8  $O_3$ ) in summer (JJA); **(b)** surface MDA8  $O_3$  in spring (MAM); **(c)** mean JJA temperature; and **(d)** mean MAM temperature driven by 1980–2010 changes in climate alone ([CTRL]–[SIM\_CLIM]). Values are differences between the five-year averages over the present-day and historical periods.

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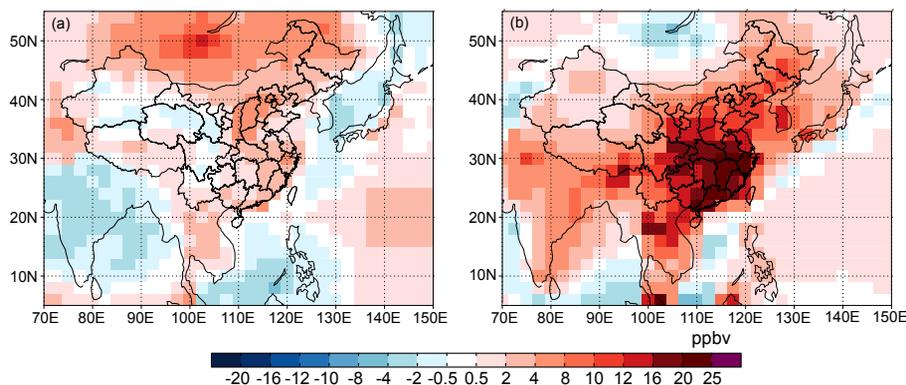


**Figure 5.** Changes in summertime (JJA) surface maximum daily 8 h average ozone concentration (MDA8 O<sub>3</sub>) driven by changes in **(a)** climate, land cover and land use combined ([CTRL]–[SIM\_COMB]); and **(b)** anthropogenic emissions alone ([CTRL]–[SIM\_ANTI]).

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**Figure 6.** Estimates of ozone-related respiratory mortality (in 1000 deaths yr<sup>-1</sup>) attributable to historical (1980–2010) changes in land cover and land use (LCLU), climate (CLIM), climate and LCLU combined (COMB), and anthropogenic emissions (ANTH) in all of East Asia and China. Uncertainty for each case represents the 95 % confidence interval of the concentration-response function.

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