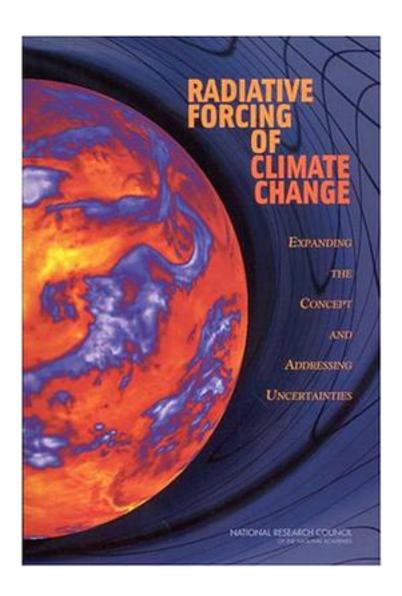
Radiative Forcing of Climate Change



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Changes in climate are driven by natural and human-induced perturbations of the Earth's energy balance. These climate drivers or "forcings" include variations in greenhouse gases, aerosols, land use, and the amount of energy Earth receives from the Sun. Although climate throughout Earth's history has varied from "snowball" conditions with global ice cover to "hothouse" conditions when glaciers all but disappeared, the climate over the past 10,000 years has been remarkably stable and favorable to human civilization. Increasing evidence points to a large human impact on global climate over the past century. The report reviews current knowledge of climate forcings and recommends critical research needed to improve understanding. Whereas emphasis to date has been on how these climate forcings affect global mean temperature, the report finds that regional variation and climate impacts other than temperature deserve increased attention.

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