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By D C Douglas

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Abstract and Figures. Arctic sea ice extent is now more than two million square kilometres less than it was in the late twentieth century, with important consequences for the climate, the ocean and traditional lifestyles in the Arctic. Although observations show a more or less continuous decline for the past four or five decades, there are few long-term records with which to assess natural sea ice variability. Until now, the question of whether or not current trends are potentially anomalous has therefore remained unanswerable. Indices to identify natural drivers of variability in sea ice in pre-industrial times. Sea ice cover is thermodynamically and dynamically controlled by. Records for the seasonal duration of sea ice in the Chukchi Sea. 9. (Fig. Sea-ice-free conditions during summer in the southeastern Arctic Ocean seem, therefore, to be a recurrent feature linked to its natural variability during warm episodes of the past. Abstract. The impact of the ongoing anthropogenic warming on the Arctic Ocean sea ice is ascertained and closely monitored. This current knowledge of the Arctic sea-ice dynamics and decline is based on about 40 y of satellite observation, an interval insufficient to document the full range of its natural variability and to fully assess feedbacks on the global ocean, climate, and ecosystems. They indicate an overall dense sea-ice cover with temporal changes in concentration or seasonal extent. The Arctic sea ice decline has occurred in recent decades by sea ice in the Arctic Ocean melting faster than it refreezes in the winter. The IPCC, in its Fourth Assessment Report, stated that greenhouse gas forcing is predominantly responsible for the decline in Arctic sea ice extent. A 2007 study found the decline to be "faster than forecasted" by model simulations. A 2011 study suggested that it could be reconciled by internal variability enhancing the greenhouse gas-forced sea ice decline over the Arctic sea ice cover is, however, not only a sensitive indicator of the climate change, but Arctic sea ice also has strong feedback effects on the other components of the climate system. Simultaneously, with the declining sea ice cover, the annual mean 2-m air temperature has increased over almost all weather stations north of 60°N, with the strongest warming in coastal and archipelago areas surrounding the Arctic Ocean (Polyakov et al. The summer and autumn sea ice decline has been the strongest in the Arctic Ocean (in particular in the Chukchi, East Siberian, and Beaufort Seas), Kara and Barents Seas, and the Baffin Bay/Labrador Sea region (Fig. 2 illustrates the record minimum ice cover in September 2012).