A tropospheric ozone maximum over the Middle East

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A Tropospheric Ozone Maximum Over the Middle East

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Abstract. The GEOS-CHEM global 3-D model of tropospheric chemistry predicts a summertime O$_3$ maximum over the Middle East, with mean mixing ratios in the middle and upper troposphere in excess of 80 ppbv. This model feature is consistent with the few observations from commercial aircraft in the region. Its origin in the model reflects a complex interplay of dynamical and chemical factors, and of anthropogenic and natural influences. The anticyclonic circulation in the middle and upper troposphere over the Middle East funnels northern midlatitude pollution transported in the westerly subtropical jet as well as lightning outflow from the Indian monsoon and pollution from eastern Asia transported in an easterly tropical jet. Large-scale subsidence over the region takes place with continued net production of O$_3$ and little mid-level outflow. Transport from the stratosphere does not contribute significantly to the O$_3$ maximum. Sensitivity simulations with anthropogenic or lightning emissions shut off indicate decreases of 20-30% and 10-15% respectively in the tropospheric O$_3$ column over the Middle East. More observations in this region are needed to confirm the presence of the O$_3$ maximum.

Introduction

The GEOS-CHEM global 3-D model of tropospheric chemistry [Bey et al., 2001] predicts a summer O$_3$ maximum in the middle troposphere over the Middle East (Figure 1, left panel). This maximum is also seen in the simulated tropospheric O$_3$ column (Figure 1, right panel). The Middle East is a largely unexplored region for O$_3$ observations, but vertical profiles from the MOZAIK program on commercial aircraft [Marenco et al., 1998; Stohl et al., 2001] indicate high summer mixing ratios that are comparable to model values (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Tropospheric O$_3$ columns in July simulated with GEOS-CHEM are usually within 10% of values observed in the MOZAIK and ozonesonde data. The Middle East maximum in the model appears in May and disappears in September, consistent with the MOZAIK data (Figure 2).

Several global 3-D models of tropospheric chemistry have been described in the recent literature, but only a few have published documentations on their global O$_3$ distributions in the free troposphere in summer. Hauglustaine et al. [1998] find a maximum in the tropospheric O$_3$ column over the Middle East in September-October. Wang et al. [1998b] and Mickley et al. [1999] show a broad Eurasian maximum in summer. Jonson et al. [2001] show high values (>90 ppbv) at 500 hPa over the Middle East in July, but even higher values at northern midlatitudes. Horowitz et al. [2001] show a 500 hPa O$_3$ maximum over the Middle East in July.

We examine here the origin of the Middle East O$_3$ maximum simulated by the GEOS-CHEM model. This origin is not obvious, and its confirmation or rejection by more detailed observations of O$_3$ in the future will provide an important test of our understanding of tropospheric chemistry. An anthropogenic origin for this maximum would have important implications for radiative forcing of climate [Mickley et al., 1999].

Model Description and Simulation of the Middle East Ozone Maximum

The GEOS-CHEM model is driven by assimilated meteorological data from the Goddard Earth Observing System (GEOS) of the NASA Data Assimilation Office (DAO) [Schubert et al., 1993]. We use meteorological fields for 1993-1997 provided at 3- and 6-hour frequencies with horizontal resolution of 4$^\circ$ latitude by 5$^\circ$ longitude and with 20 (1993-1995) or 26 (1996-1997) $\sigma$ layers in the vertical between the Earth’s surface and 10 hPa (1993-1995) or 0.1 hPa (1996-1997). Simulation of O$_3$ in the model uses a chemical mechanism with 120 species to describe tropospheric O$_3$-NO$_x$-hydrocarbon chemistry. A detailed description and evaluation of the model is given by Bey et al. [2001].

Anthropogenic emissions are specified using a base emission inventory for 1985 scaled to 1993-1995 following Bey et al. [2001]. The base inventory includes NO$_x$ emissions from Benkovitz et al. [1996], nonmethane hydrocarbon (NMHC) emissions fromPiccot et al. [1992] and CO emissions as summarized in Wang et al. [1998a]. Lightning NO$_x$ emissions are linked to deep convection following the parameterization of Price and Rind [1992]. The resulting anthropogenic and lightning sources of NO$_x$ are 22.8 Tg N yr$^{-1}$ and 3.4 Tg N yr$^{-1}$, respectively. The cross-tropopause transport of O$_3$ is simulated by the Synoz method of McLinden et al. [2000] with a global cross-tropopause flux of 475 Tg O$_3$ yr$^{-1}$.

We conducted a five-year simulation for 1993-1997. The interannual variations in the 400 hPa O$_3$ mixing ratios and tropospheric O$_3$ columns averaged over the Middle East in
July are less than 5%. All five years feature the Middle East maximum. Our analysis focuses on July 1997. Sensitivity simulations are initialized in March 1997; earlier initialization has little effect on results.

Figure 3 shows the O$_3$ fluxes and production rates at 250 hPa (left panel) and the O$_3$ fluxes at 500 hPa (right panel). In summer, the meteorological setting over the Middle East is dominated by a heat low at the surface and an anticyclonic circulation in the middle and upper troposphere with largescale subsidence [Takahashi and Arakawa, 1981; Ye and Wu, 1998]. In the north of the region, circumpolar transport of O$_3$ takes place in the westerly subtropical jet centered at 40°N (Figure 3). Much of the O$_3$ at northern midlatitudes is of anthropogenic origin. Entrainment of this midlatitude pollution into the anticyclonic circulation over the Middle East is apparent below 400 hPa (Figure 3, right panel). In the lower troposphere, the prevailing summer northwesterlies over the eastern Mediterranean [Dayan, 1986] transport anthropogenic O$_3$ from Europe into the Middle East and northern Africa.

The left panel of Figure 3 indicates easterly transport at high altitudes of O$_3$ produced in the upper troposphere over southern and eastern Asia. Intense lightning associated with the summer monsoon produces large amounts of NO$_x$ in the upper troposphere over the Indian subcontinent [Christian and Latham, 1998; Nesbitt et al., 2000], while strong convection over eastern Asia transports large amounts of anthropogenic NO$_x$ to the upper troposphere. The model simulates 0.20-0.24 ppbv NO$_x$ in the upper troposphere over the Indian subcontinent, similar to the levels of NO$_x$ observed by commercial aircraft over that region [Brunner et al., 1998]. Simulated O$_3$ production rates in the upper troposphere over southern and eastern Asia exceed 5 ppb day$^{-1}$ (Figure 3, left panel), an unusually high value [Jaegle et al., 2001]. The resulting O$_3$ is transported to the Middle East by the tropical easterly jet as part of the anticyclonic circulation over South Asia (Figure 3, left panel). The easterly flow in the upper troposphere at 20-30°N is a well-known feature of the summertime South Asia circulation [Takahashi and Arakawa, 1981; Ye and Wu, 1998].

We analyzed the model budget of tropospheric O$_3$ for the Middle East region defined as the rectangle in the right panel of Figure 3. Net inflow through the eastern boundary of the region accounts for 65% of the regional O$_3$ supply to the upper troposphere (<300 hPa) while in situ chemical production provides another 30%. Downward transport from the stratosphere is unimportant. Net O$_3$ production takes place above 500 hPa (~6 km) and in the boundary layer up to 700 hPa (2-3 km). In the upper troposphere, the production is driven primarily by lightning NO$_x$ advected into the region from the Indian monsoon, while in the boundary layer it is driven by local anthropogenic NO$_x$. Subsidence from the upper troposphere provides 80% of the O$_3$ supply to the middle troposphere in the region, sustaining the O$_3$ maximum. Upward transport takes place in the lower troposphere.
Sources Contributing to the Ozone Maximum

We used tagged O₃ (odd oxygen) tracers [Wang et al., 1998c] and sensitivity simulations to further understand the geographical source regions and precursor emissions contributing to the Middle East maximum. The tagged tracer simulation transports as separate tracers O₃ originating in the stratosphere, upper troposphere (<300 hPa), middle troposphere (300-600 hPa) and the lower troposphere (>600 hPa). We find that production in the upper and middle troposphere accounts for 30-40 ppbv (35-50%) and 10-20 ppbv (15-25%) respectively of the 400 hPa O₃ over the Middle East, while production in the lower troposphere and transport from the stratosphere account for 15-20 ppbv (20-25%) and less than 10 ppbv (15%), respectively. The particularly high contribution of upper tropospheric production to O₃ over the Middle East, relative to other regions in the northern subtropical band, reflects the large-scale subsidence over the region. Although the overall contribution from the stratosphere is relatively small, it is higher over the Middle East than over other northern subtropical regions.

To determine the relative contributions to the O₃ maximum from anthropogenic versus lightning emissions, we conducted sensitivity simulations with either anthropogenic or lightning emissions or both omitted. We also conducted simulations in which anthropogenic emissions from the Middle East, Asia (not including the Middle East), Europe, and North America were omitted separately. Figure 4 shows the differences in the simulated tropospheric O₃ columns and 400 hPa O₃ mixing ratios relative to the standard simulation. Suppressing lightning emissions decreases the O₃ column over the Middle East in July by 5-7 DU (10-15%), while suppressing anthropogenic emissions leads to a 8-12 DU (20-30%) decrease (Figures 4a,c). The effects of light-
ning and anthropogenic emissions on the tropospheric O$_3$ column both show maxima in the Middle East, because of the strong subsidence over the region as discussed previously. Lightning and anthropogenic emissions each contribute 10-20 ppbv to the 400 hPa O$_3$ over the Middle East (Figures 4b,d). The effect of suppressing both lightning and anthropogenic emissions is found to be nearly additive; even with these two sources suppressed there remains a Middle East maximum (peaking at 47 ppbv at 400 hPa) because of subsidence.

Further investigation of the anthropogenic influence on the Middle East maximum indicates that Asian influence dominates in the southern part of the region, while European and North American influences dominate in the north, reflecting the flow patterns described previously (Figures 4e-h). European and North American influences are found to be of comparable magnitudes. The column maximum in Figure 4e is mainly due to local emissions, while the mixing ratio maximum at 400 hPa in Figure 4f is due largely to emissions from southern and eastern Asia.

The summertime troposphere O$_3$ maximum simulated by the GEOS-CHEM model over the Middle East thus reflects a complex interplay of transport and chemistry as well as a superimposition of anthropogenic and natural (lightning) influences. More observations are needed to confirm the presence and intensity of this maximum, and would provide an important test for the current understanding of tropospheric O$_3$ chemistry. Satellite observations would be particularly valuable.

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