2 | EXPLORING CLIMATE ENGINEERING UNCERTAINTIES

Exploring the 'termination shock'

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If deployment of SRM were stopped suddenly it could lead to a rapid rise in global temperatures, which would probably be even more damaging than the slower warming from unchecked climate change. This effect – known as the 'termination shock' – is an influential idea in SRM discussions, and for some commentators it is one of the greatest potential threats from the development of geoengineering. This presentation will outline the science behind the termination shock, but its main focus will be the socio-political dimensions, and the drivers that might cause sudden termination, such as terrorism, economic collapse, natural disasters, or the discovery of damaging side effects. It will explore the pathways by which each of the drivers might lead to SRM being stopped, reviewing where technical and political responses might help avoid termination or reduce its impacts. Based on the analysis of the different pathways, the presentation will question whether the risk of termination shock has been overplayed in geoengineering commentary.