

Viewpoint: How did science become a messy jumble of politics?

Should science be political? It is often imagined that debates around this sort of question turn on abstruse theoretical matters. What does it mean to be political? And is it even possible to avoid it?

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In October 2020, the prestigious academic journal *Nature* endorsed Joe Biden’s presidential campaign. [Recently,] *Nature Human Behaviour*—a journal which, as far as I can tell, is only loosely related to *Nature*—published the [results of an experiment](#) purporting to show that this endorsement eroded trust in science in general and in *Nature* in particular. This included diminished trust in information provided in the journal about COVID-19.

If these results are accurate and generalizable, they can form the basis of a strong and simple argument against scientific journals adopting the practice of making political endorsements. First, these endorsements don’t serve their intended purpose—to convince anyone who’s undecided to support a particular candidate—so there’s no real benefit. Second, these endorsements threaten something else the journals value—public trust in science and in the journals themselves—so there is a real cost or risk.

[This is an excerpt. Read the full article here](#)