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How science gets politicized: The role of conspiratorial narratives in questioning science in general and dismissing contested scientific topics

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While scientific knowledge should be inherently apolitical, ideological contestation of science and of certain scientific topics is well-documented, however predominantly in the US. Trust in science is often eroded by conspiratorial narratives - be it general or targeted - resulting in less support for science-based policies. Across two studies with Serbian respondents, we explore how ideology and conspiratorial thinking predict attitudes towards science. In Study 1 (N=224), conspiracy mentality and belief in medical CTs predicted less trust in science, over and above right-wing ideology. In Study 2 (N=271), we sought to replicate this finding, but introduced social and economic conservatism, and attitudes towards contested science topics (climate change, biotechnology, GMO, and nuclear energy). Right-wing ideology, and social but not economic conservatism predicted general distrust in science; medical conspiracism, but not conspiracy mentality contributed over and above ideology. We observed a similar ideological pattern for prediction of specific science related attitudes; conspiratorial beliefs added to the prediction of attitudes towards climate change, GMO and nuclear energy, but not towards biotechnology. Despite some differences, it seems that conservative ideology, coupled with general conspiratorial tendencies and content-specific medical conspiratorial beliefs, hinder trust in science altogether, and, somewhat less, reflect in scientific controversies of the day.