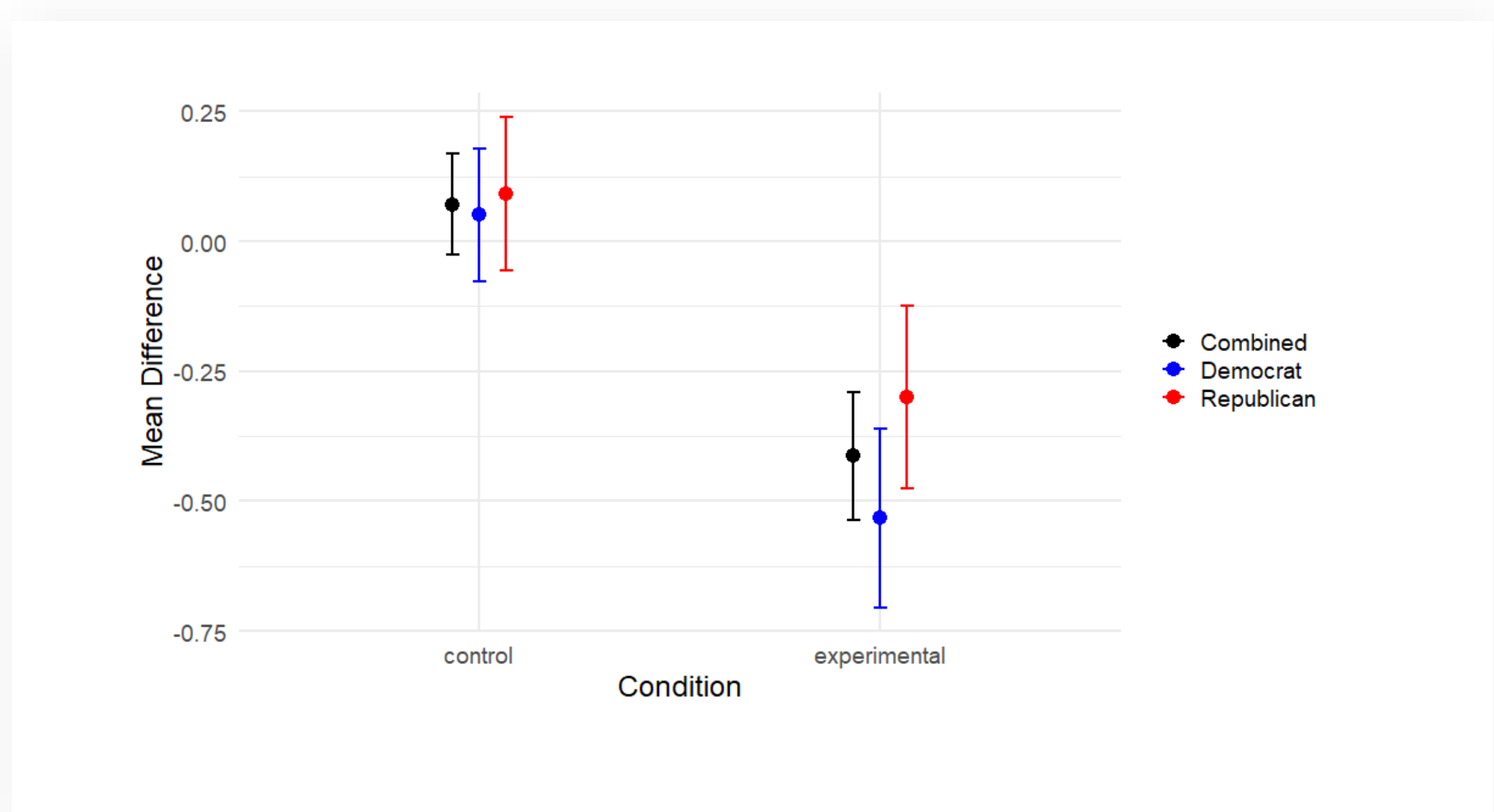
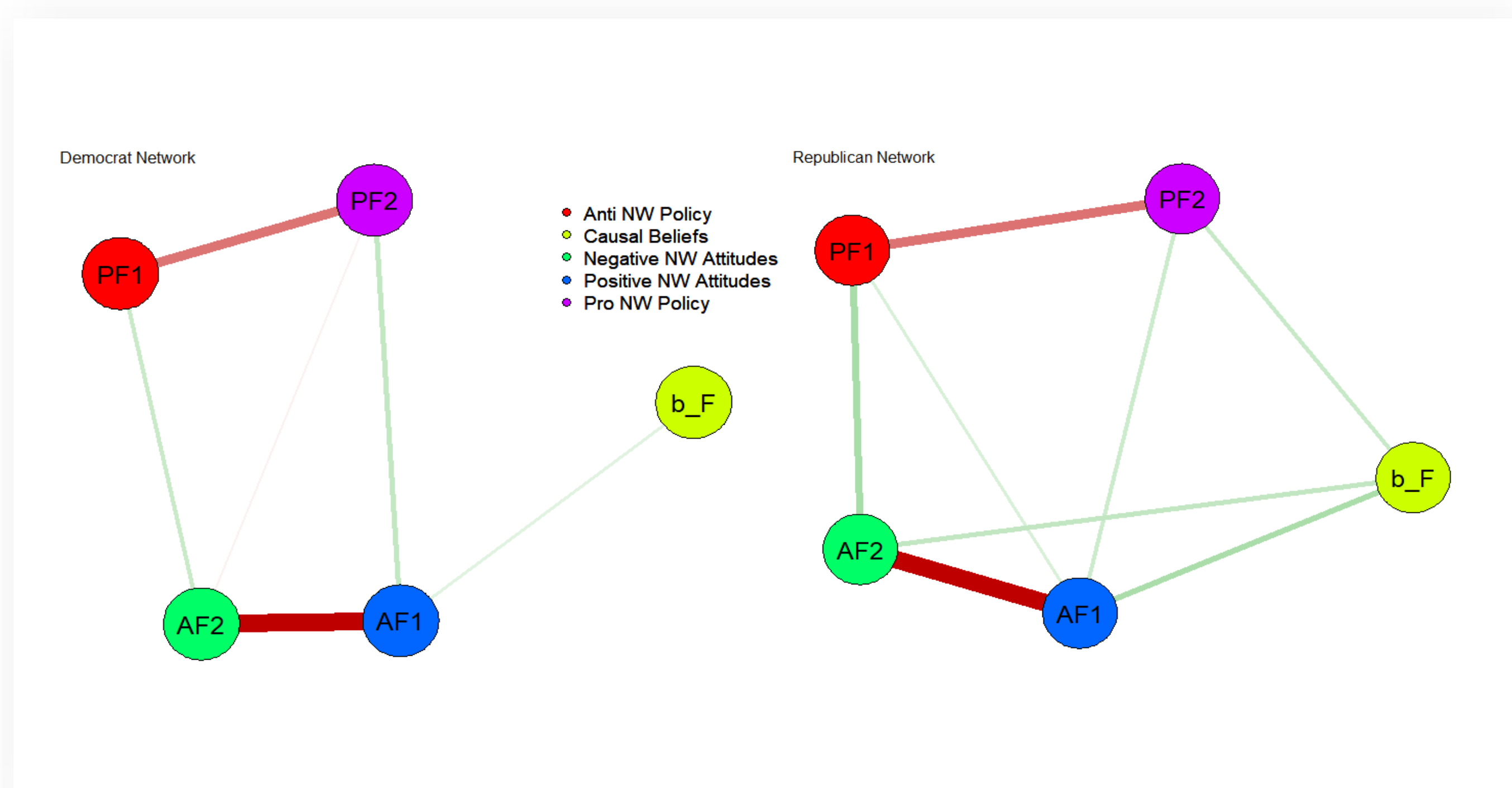


Causal beliefs about nuclear deterrence drive nuclear attitudes but not policy preferences.

Background: Nuclear deterrence is often believed to ensure peace. How challenging this belief might reshape public attitudes and policy preferences on nuclear weapons?

Result 1: Causal beliefs are more central to Republicans' networks of nuclear attitudes and policy preferences than Democrats'. This suggests Republicans' policy preferences may be more tightly linked to their beliefs about nuclear deterrence.

Result 2: Counterarguments significantly reduced causal beliefs about nuclear deterrence across both political groups.



While this led to a decrease in positive attitudes toward nuclear weapons (a), it did not significantly shift policy preferences for deterrence or disarmament (b). This highlights the challenge of translating belief changes into concrete policy support.

Methods

1 Observational Study

600 U.S. adults (Prolific)

Measures (+ item examples):

- Causal Beliefs:** "By acquiring nuclear weapons, North Korea has decreased its chances of being invaded."
- Attitudes:** "Nuclear weapons contribute to peace by preventing conflict between countries."
- Policy Preferences:** "Do you agree that the United States should join the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?"

Analysis: CFA & Network modeling

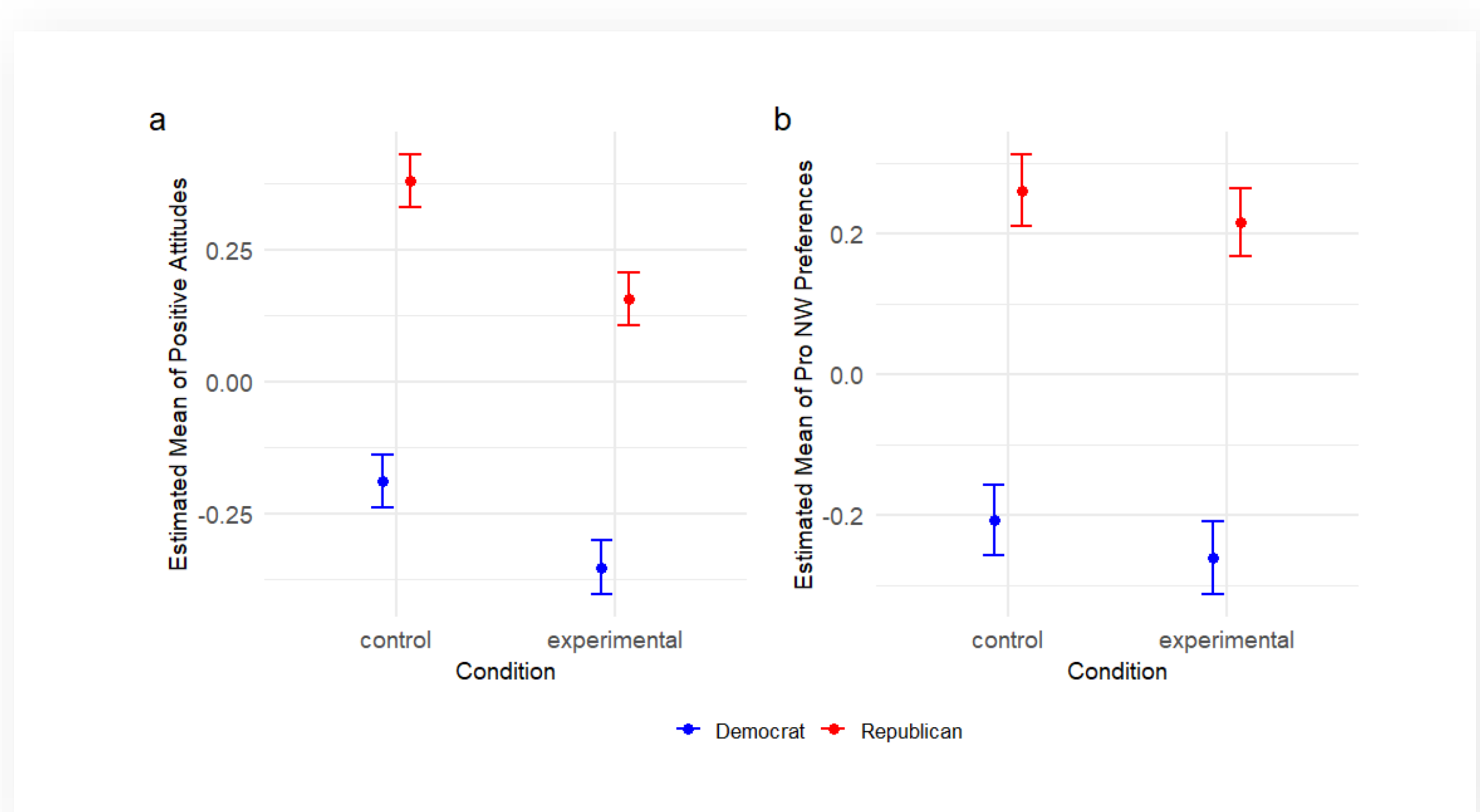
2 Experimental Study

814 U.S. adults (Prolific)

Intervention:

- Experimental Group:** Read counterarguments like: "Despite nuclear weapons, the Kargil War of 1999 between India and Pakistan occurred, showing nuclear deterrence's limits."
- Control Group:** Read unrelated material on international trade.

Outcome Measures: Pre-/post-intervention changes in causal beliefs + attitudes and policies measures as in Study 1.



read the full preprint **Atomic Convictions: How Causal Arguments Shape Public Attitudes to Nuclear Weapons at SSRN:**



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