Appendix for:
How Intractable is Security Dilemma Thinking?

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1 Experimental Protocol

The experiments were programmed on Qualtrics and fielded in two languages: English (in the United States) and Chinese (in China). Below are the experimental protocols in both languages. The Chinese version is identical to the U.S. experiment, except that mentions of the U.S. become "China" (and vice versa) in the Chinese experiment. Similarly, for the subset of respondents in the 2023 survey assigned to evaluate their own country's actions, the survey is identical but country labels are adjusted appropriately (so "China" becomes "the United States" for U.S. respondents evaluating their own country and "美国" becomes "中国" for Chinese respondents evaluating their own country).[1]

Introduction Screen

The following questions are about international relations.
下列问题有关国际关系

Scenario Screen

As you might know, China has increased its military spending in recent years.
如您所知，美国近年来增加了军事开支

Treatment Screen

As you might know, China has increased its military spending in recent years.
如您所知，美国近年来增加了军事开支

[For Treatment Group 1 (offense defense), add:]
Experts believe that many of the military investments will increase China's capability to defend itself, but will not increase its capability to attack other states.
专家认为，美国新增的许多军事投资将提升其防御的能力，但不会增加其攻击他国的能力

[For Treatment Group 2 (reciprocal), add:]
Experts believe that China has increased military investments in response to others increasing their military investment
专家认为，美国增加军事投资是为了回应其他国家军事投资的增加

[For Treatment Group 3 (nuclear weapons), add:]
Because both China and the U.S. have nuclear weapons, a war between China and the U.S. would be potentially very costly to both countries.
由于美国和中国都拥有核武器，中美之间如果爆发战争，对两国都可能会造成巨大的损失

[For Treatment Group 4 (interdependence), add:]
Because the Chinese and U.S. economies are highly dependent on one another, a war between China and the U.S. would be potentially very costly to both countries.
由于中美两国经济高度相互依赖，中美之间如果爆发战争，对两国都可能会造成巨大的损失

1. The only exception to this is that Question 1 is not asked of those in the 2023 survey tasked with evaluating the behavior of their own country. See footnote 9 in the main article.

Question 1

[Scenario information from the previous screen is included before the question:]

Do you think that U.S. spending on the military should increase, decrease or be kept about the same?
在您看来，中国的军事开支是否应该增加，减少还是维持不变?

[Options:]
Decrease greatly / Decrease somewhat / Decrease slightly / Keep the same / Increase slightly / Increase somewhat / Increase greatly
减少非常多/ 减少好些/ 减少一点/ 维持不变/ 增加一点/ 增加好些/ 增加非常多

Question 2

On a scale from 1 to 7, do you think China increasing its military spending is...
在下列1 - 7 的量表上，您认为中国增加其军事开支是

[Options:]
1 Purely for defensive reasons / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 Purely for offensive reasons
1 纯粹出于防御原因/ 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 纯粹出于进攻原因

Question 3

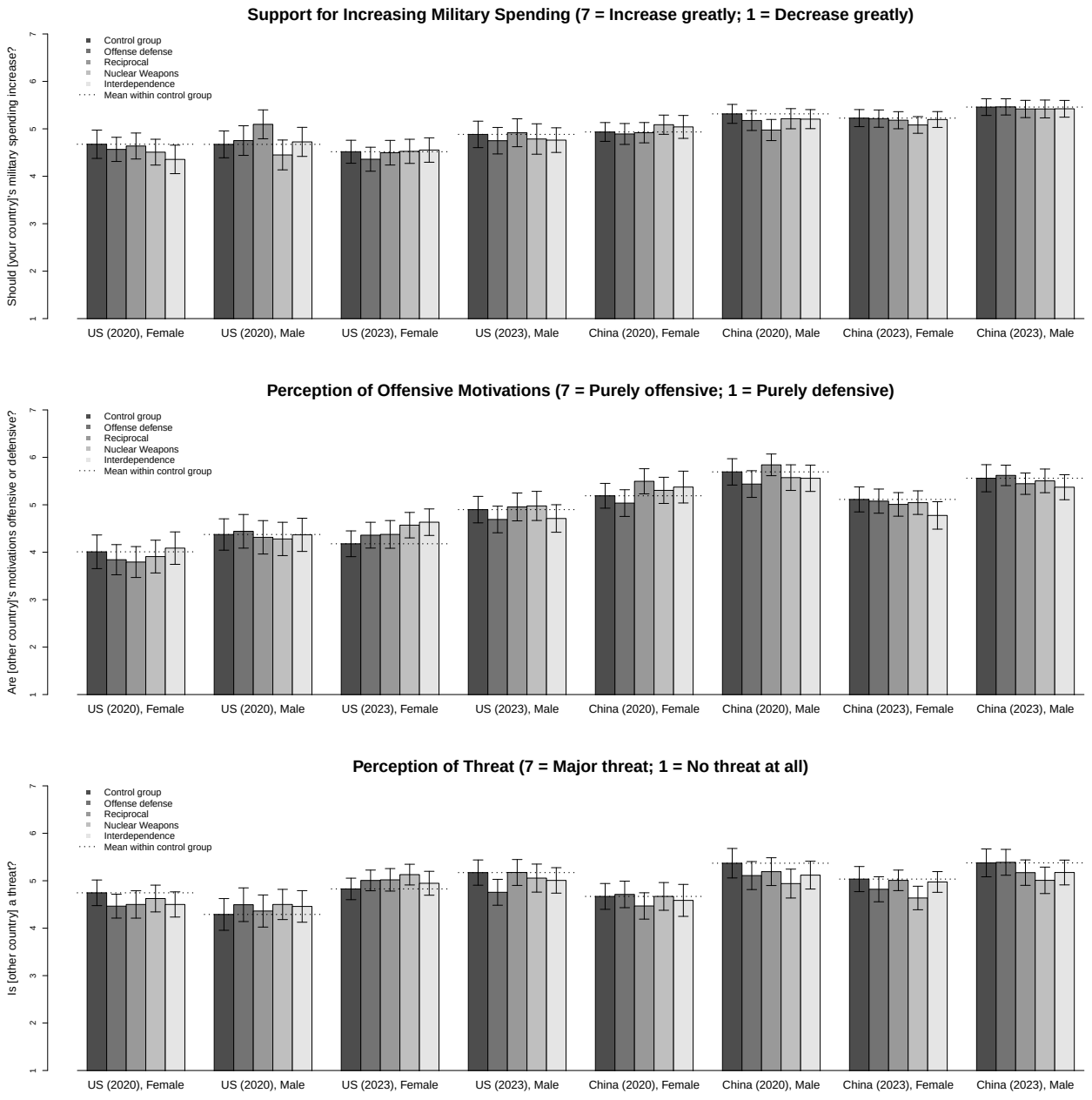
On a scale from 1 (no threat at all) to 7 (major threat), how much do you think China is a threat to the security of the U.S.?
你认为美国对中国安全的威胁有多大? 请按1（完全没有威胁）到7 （重大威胁）的等级评分

[Options:]
1 No threat / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 Major threat
1 没有威胁/ 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 重大威胁

2 Gender

Figure 1 shows how the results vary by gender. As can be seen, absolute levels of threat perception are generally somewhat higher in men than women across the various experiments. However, the treatments do not result in substantively or statistically significant shifts for either males or females.

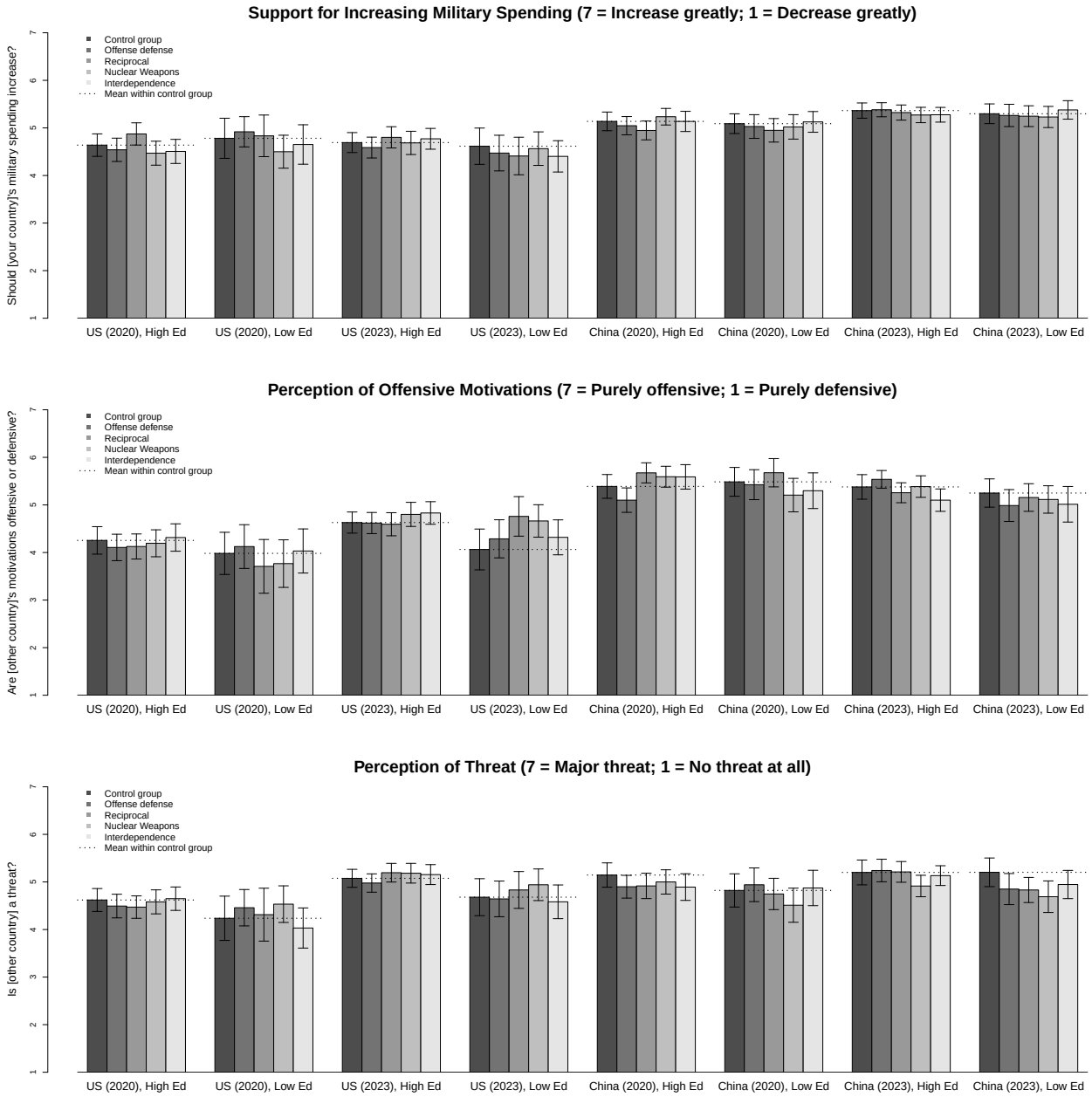
Figure 1: Results disaggregated by gender.



3 Education

Figure 2 shows the results disaggregated by education (above or below median education levels). As can be seen, absolute levels of threat perception are generally similar across high and low education levels, nor do the treatment effects differ significantly. In short, levels of security dilemma thinking appear to be similar across levels of education.

Figure 2: Results disaggregated by education. Bars represent 95 % confidence intervals.



4 Political Knowledge

Figure 3 shows the results disaggregated by political knowledge in both countries. In both surveys respondents were asked four questions to assess their political knowledge, each of which was a multiple choice question with four options to pick from. The four questions for each survey were as follows, with the options in parentheses.
These questions are chosen to be reasonably challenging and (roughly) comparable in difficulty across the four different experiments. For each sample, to provide a rough division between those with more political knowledge and those without, we take those with above the median number of correct responses and code them as "high knowledge;" those with below the median number of correct responses are coded as "low knowledge." As can be seen, absolute levels of threat perception are generally similar across high and low political knowledge, nor do the treatment effects differ significantly. In short, levels of threat perception consistent with security dilemma thinking appear to be similar across levels of political knowledge.

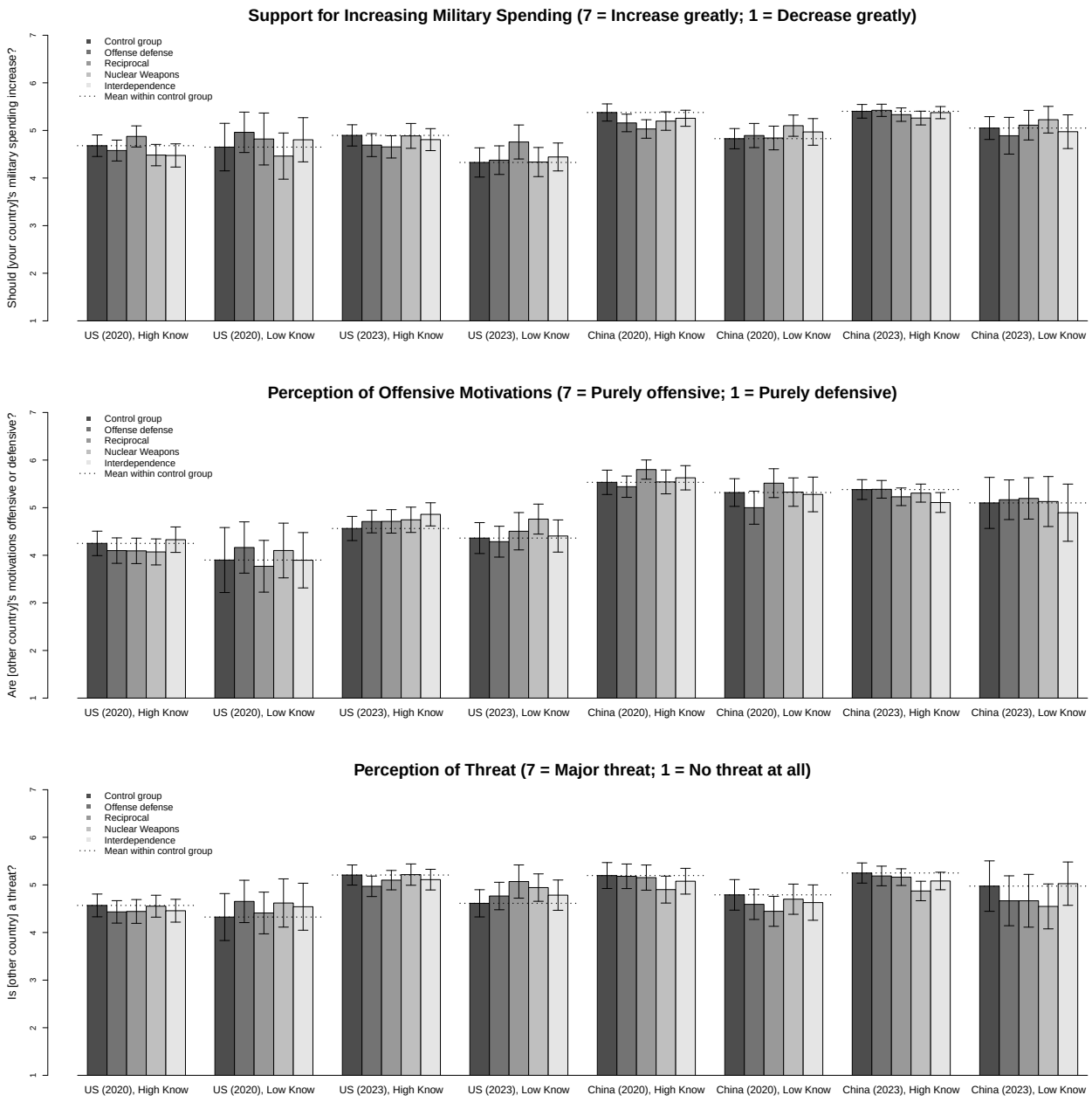
- China, 2020:
  - To your knowledge, what was the official growth rate of China's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018 (Less than 5%; 5.0% to 5.9%; 6.0% to 6.9%; 7.0 to 7.9%; 8.0 to 8.9%; 9% or more)
  - To your knowledge, the current governor of the People's Bank of China is (Yi Gang; Wang Yi; Justin Yifu Lin; Hua Chunying)
  - To your knowledge, Han Zheng's current office is (Premier; Vice Premier; Minister of Public Security; Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection)
  - To your knowledge, Lee Kuan Yew is the former leader of (South Korea; North Korea; Singapore; Taiwan)
- United States, 2020:
  - To your knowledge, Steven Mnuchin's current office is (Chief Justice; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of the Treasury; Federal Reserve Board Chairman)
  - To your knowledge, Mark Esper's current office is (Secretary of State; Attorney General; Senator; Secretary of Defense)
  - To your knowledge, Lee Kuan Yew was formerly the leader of (South Korea; Singapore; Taiwan; North Korea)
  - The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics counts a person as unemployed if they are not employed at any job and are looking for work. By this definition, what percentage of Americans was unemployed in November of 2019? (Around 2 percent; Around 4 percent; Around 6 percent; Around 8 percent)
- China, 2023:
  - To your knowledge, the official GDP growth rate of China in 2022 is (2%, 3%, 4%, 5%, 6-7%, 8-9%)
  - To your knowledge, the current governor of the People's Bank of China is (Yi Gang; Wang Yi; Lin Yifu; Hua Chunying)
  - To your knowledge, Qin Gang's current position is (Prime Minister; Vice Premier; Minister of Foreign Affairs; Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection)
  - To your knowledge, Lee Kuan Yew was formerly the leader of (South Korea; Singapore; Taiwan authorities; North Korea)
- United States, 2023:
  - To your knowledge, Lloyd Austin's current office is (Chief Justice; Secretary of Homeland Security; Secretary of Defense; Federal Reserve Board Chairman)

– To your knowledge, Janet Yellen's current office is (Secretary of State; Attorney General; Senator; Secretary of the Treaury)

– To your knowledge, who holds the office of the Prime Minister of Canada (Chris Hipkins; Anthony Albanese; Rishi Sunak; Justin Trudeau)

– The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics counts a person as unemployed if they are not employed at any job and are looking for work. By this definition, what percentage of Americans was unemployed in February of 2023? (Around 2 percent; Around 4 percent; Around 6 percent; Around 8 percent)

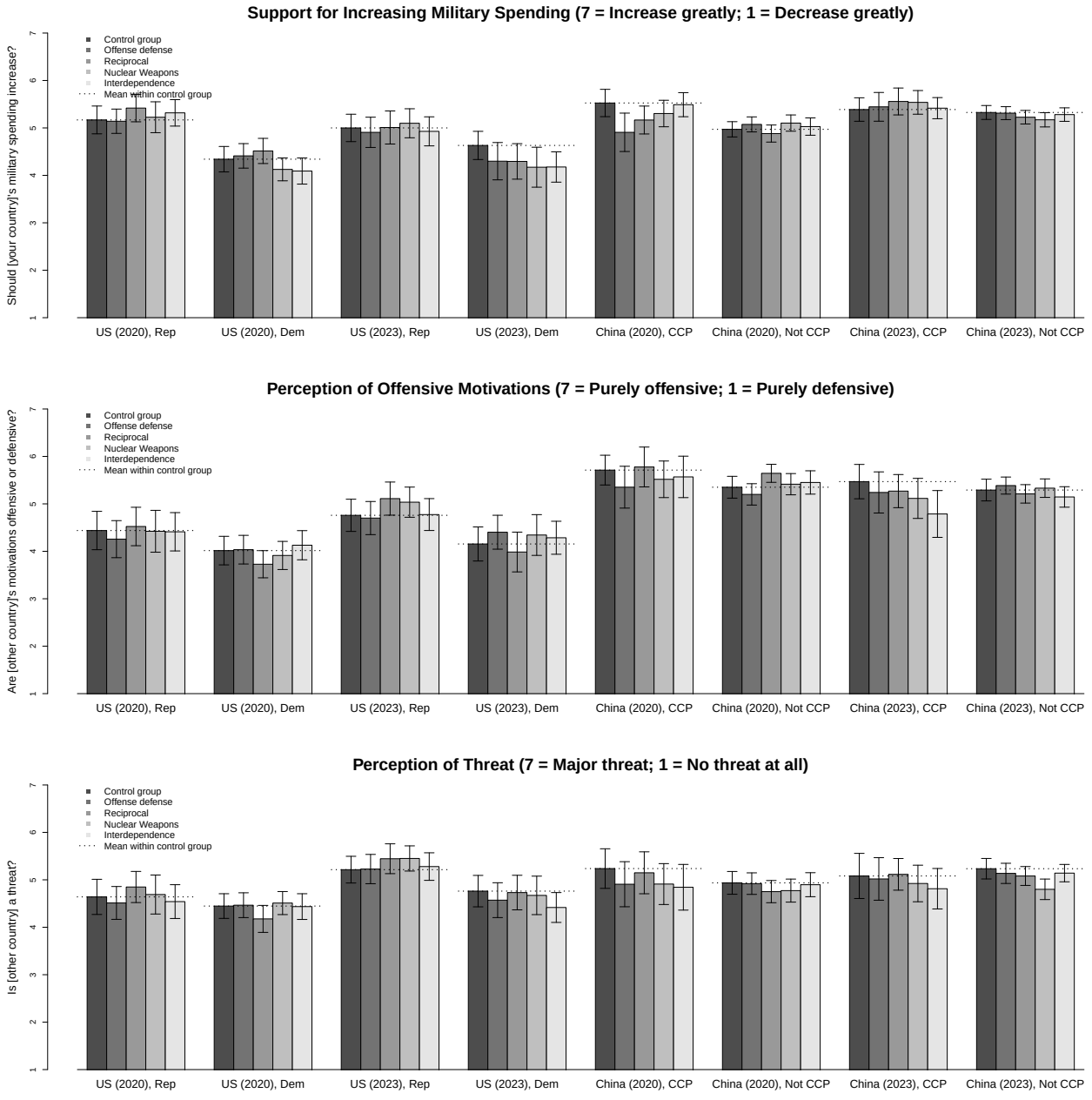
Figure 3: Results disaggregated by political knowledge.



5 Partisanship/CCP Membership

Figure 4 shows the results disaggregated by partisanship in the United States (Republicans vs Democrats) and CCP membership in China (current/past CCP members vs non-members). As can be seen (and would be expected), Republicans and CCP members are generally more hawkish with respect to the other country than Democrats/non-CCP members. However, again, none of the treatments appear to moderate threat perceptions consistent with security-dilemma thinking in a consistent or substantively significant manner

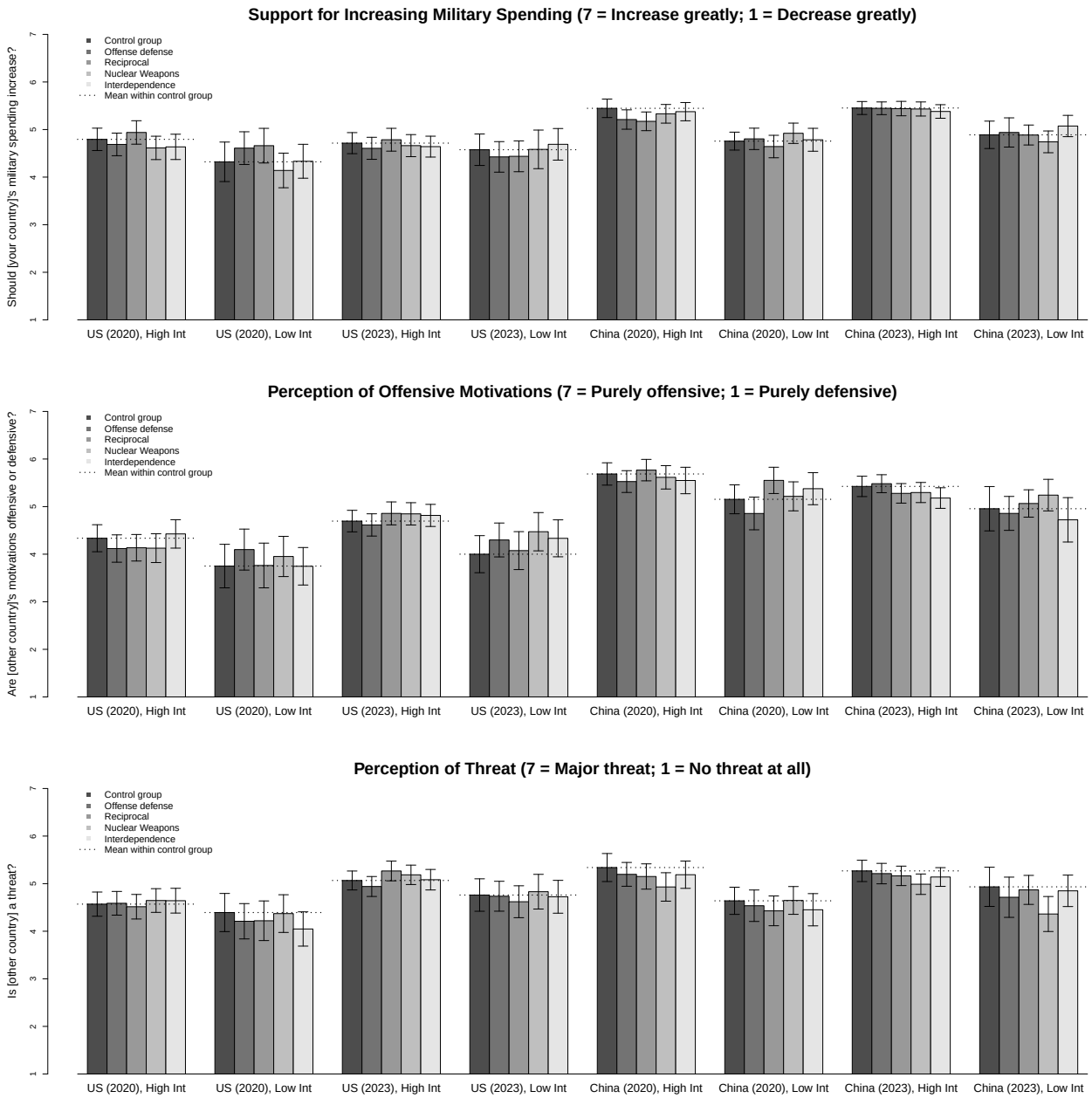
Figure 4: Results disaggregated by partisanship/CCP membership.



6 Political Interest

Figure 5 shows the results disaggregated by levels of political interest. Respondents are asked to rate themselves on a four point scale in how much interest they take in political news (with four indicating "a great deal of interest" and one indicating "not at all"). For each sample, to provide a rough division between those with more political interest and those with less, we take those answering above the median response as "high interest;" those with below the median response are coded as "low interest." As can be seen those self-reporting as having more political interest are generally more hawkish with respect to the other country. However, again, none of the treatments appear to moderate threat perceptions consistent with security-dilemma thinking in a consistent or substantively significant manner.

Figure 5: Results disaggregated by political interest.



7 Asymmetries

Figure 6 shows the asymmetries in evaluations of respondent's own state vs the other state, disaggregated by gender, partisanship (in the U.S.) or CCP membership (in China), political interest and political knowledge. As can be seen, there is some tentative evidence that different subgroups display different levels of asymmetry: for example, men in China, Republicans in the United States, and those with higher political knowledge all exhibit stronger asymmetries in their evaluation of their own state vs the other state.

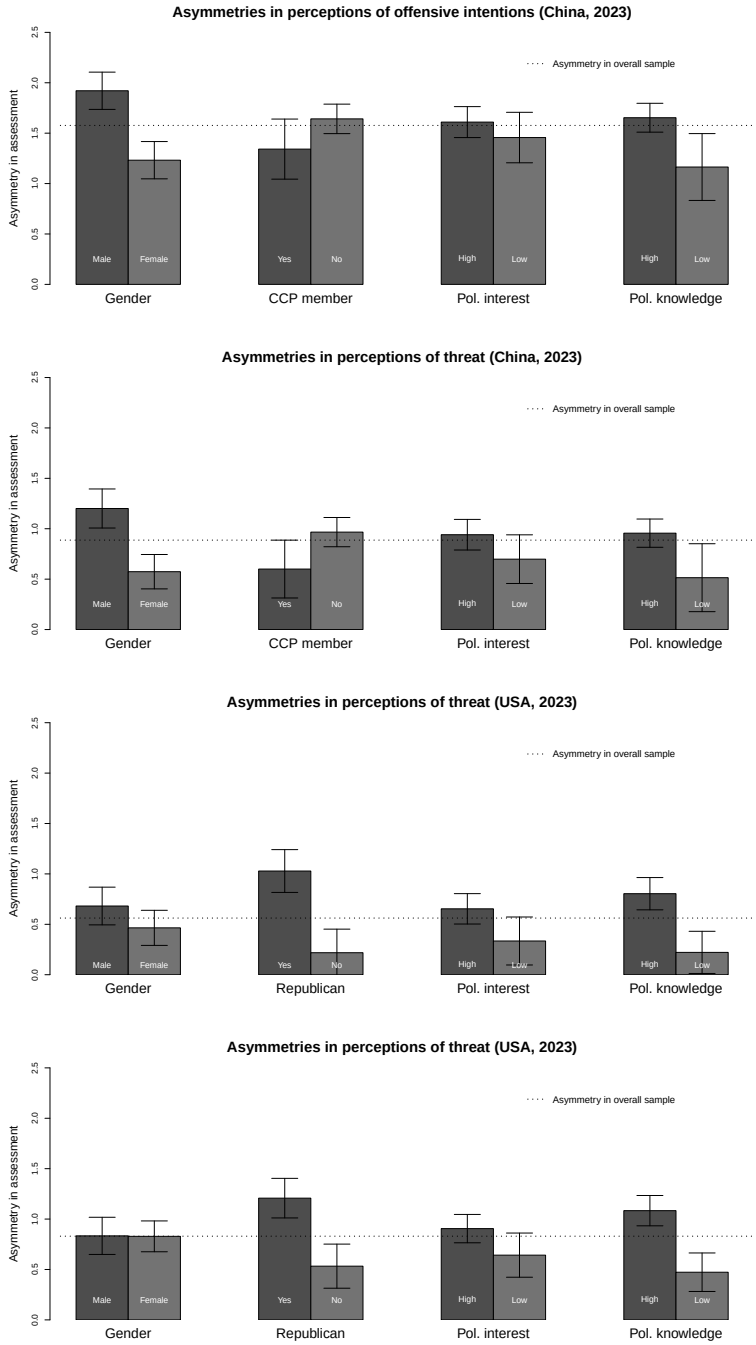



Figure 6: Asymmetries in U.S. and Chinese respondents' inferences drawn from their own behavior relative to the behavior of the other state disaggregated by various characteristics. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals.