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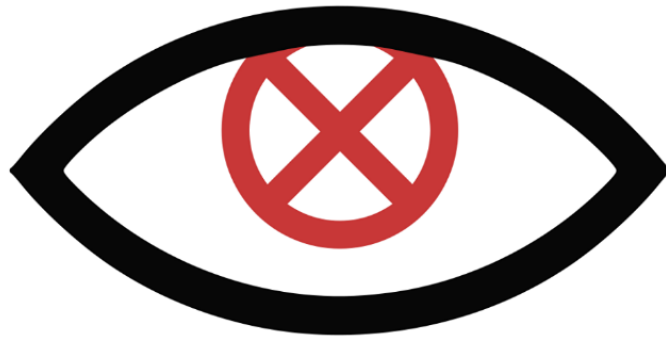
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Cues or Content:

Explaining vote choice in the Dutch 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act

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Abstract

A recurring argument against democracy, both in its direct and representative forms, is that 'the people' are not capable of making good political decisions. For decades, researchers have concluded that the median voter does not have the political knowledge thought necessary to cast a sensible and well-informed vote. More recently, this view was challenged through the concept of heuristics: information shortcuts that allow people to make choices not based primarily on encyclopaedic knowledge, but on things like personal experiences, the media, and the opinions of others. The idea that people make heavy use of heuristics when they decide on a vote has become broadly accepted in political science. However, much is still unclear about the role played by these information shortcuts in the context of direct democracy in Europe. Using survey data and logistic regression, I examine how vote choice in the Dutch 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act was affected by heuristics use, as well as by voters' personal views on the factual referendum content. The results indicate that the referendum subject matter was the primary factor of influence. Voters' personal opinions regarding the referendum content proved to be a strong predictor of whether a Yes- or No- vote was cast, and this did not change when the influence of four popular types of information shortcuts was controlled for. Still, the influence of heuristics cannot be entirely discounted, as I found support for the relevance of two types: party affiliation and, to a degree, endorsements.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Direct democracy is not nearly as common in the contemporary world as the representative variety. Nonetheless, its mechanisms, primarily the referendum, have seen use in over half of all presently existing countries (Altman, 2011). Most nations use them sparingly. This might have a part in explaining why, when they *are* used, they tend to be the centre of attention starting months before any votes are cast. This was certainly the case for the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, which was held in the Netherlands in March of 2018. As the third instance of direct democracy at the national level in the country's history, it renewed political and societal discussion on multiple subjects that had also been hotly debated around the time of the previous referendum, two years earlier: should referendums have a place in Dutch politics? How should the government react to their outcomes? How do they influence the existing representative system? The governing coalition made its position quite clear when it moved to repeal the law that make referendums possible at the end of 2017. While this controversial decision makes it unlikely that the Netherlands will see another referendum in the coming years, in time popular support for this type of direct legislation could very well lead to a comeback.

The Dutch referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act was advisory. However, when a plurality of voters voted against the new law, the coalition still decided to make some adjustments to it. Additional restrictions were implemented regarding how long information collected by security services can be retained, and when this information can be shared with foreign agencies (Winterman, van Ast & den Hartog, 2018). This goes to show that referendums, even when they are nonbinding, can be a useful tool for citizens to exert political influence. The impact of a referendum can be massive, all the way up to the constitutional level (Qvortrup, 2005). As such, it is unsurprising that direct democracy has seen plenty of research by Political Science scholars. One recurring topic has a significant connection to elections under representative democracy: how do people decide on which vote they are going to cast? Early research revealed that voters are generally uninformed about political matters, which cast doubt on their ability to make good political decisions (Campbell et al., 1960; Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). Over time, this view was at least partially amended through the introduction of the concept of information shortcuts, or heuristics. It was found that voters simplify the process of decision-making by forgoing complete information. Instead, they rely on past experiences, the views of other people, media cues, and anything

else they can use to infer what is most likely to be the right choice for them personally (Popkin, 1994). While the use of heuristics was initially described in the context of elections, later studies found that the same basic logic applies to direct democracy voting (Bowler & Donovan, 2000; Lupia, 1994).

The topics of voter confidence and heuristics use, specifically in the context of direct democracy, have seen a decent amount of investigation in the past few decades. However, most of the research has been focused on the United States. Influential studies like Lupia (1994), Lau & Redlawsk (2001) and Bowler & Donovan (2000) all concentrate on voting in America or in specific American states, usually California. The political system and culture here significantly differ from those found in Europe, which means it is distinctly possible that heuristics are used in different ways by European voters. For one, Partisan cues are usually absent in American initiative campaigns (Gerber & Lupia, 1995). This suggests that this type of cue may be more relevant in Europe, as the convenience of higher availability could cause voters in this region to rely on it more.

Research on direct democracy in Europe is available, but the vast majority focusses on two distinct elements: referendums on European integration (e.g. Hobolt, 2007), and direct legislation in Switzerland (e.g. Christin et al., 2002). This makes sense, as referendums and initiatives are primarily found in these contexts, but it does mean that a third category gets relatively little attention: European national referendums that are not connected to the European Union. While it is possible that heuristics use is broadly comparable for all three categories, this cannot simply be assumed. Especially since there are systematic differences that can reasonably be expected to lead to different results. EU referendums tend to concern subjects that voters have little knowledge of, particularly when compared to national topics (hobolt, 2007). Also, the position of national political parties on European integration is not always obvious. This is because, while the left-right dimension is the primary structuring element in national politics in Europe, a party's position on European integration cannot easily be discerned from its place on the left-right axis. This can affect, for instance, the usefulness of the party endorsement heuristic (ibid.). Moving to the second popular topic for referendum research, Switzerland is clearly an outlier in Europe due to the many referendums and initiatives that are held there. The exceptionally high degree to which direct democracy is integrated into the political system means Swiss voters get ample opportunity to get accustomed to this practice, which is not the case for voters in other European countries. While it is unclear *if* experienced referendum voters differ from inexperienced people in their use of information

shortcuts, the possibility of systematic differences makes Swiss-oriented research difficult to generalize beyond its borders.

The unique characteristics of EU referendums and direct democracy in Switzerland imply that research into the third category of European referendums, i.e. national non-EU referendums, could lead to new insights into the role of heuristics in European direct democracy voting. My aim is to provide some of these insights. I attempt to do this through an analysis of the Dutch referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act (Wiv 2017 Act, or Wiv). This case is sufficiently representative of the broader category of national non-EU referendums to make the findings generalizable. It is citizen-initiated, non-binding and reactive, and these elements have individually all characterized referendums across multiple European countries. Also, as this was the second Dutch referendum in two years, it can be assumed that voters were at least somewhat familiar with this phenomenon. This is beneficial, as a lack of experience with direct democracy could very well lead people to behave atypically when deciding on their vote.

The basis for my analysis is the self-reported voting behaviour of 1574 voters in the Wiv referendum. I make use of survey data collected by CentERdata, a research institute connected to the Tilburg University. This data serves to test the influence of four prevalent information shortcuts on voting choice, along with the influence of the referendum's actual subject matter. A series of logistic regressions is used to test the relevance of these heuristics.

Based on this approach my thesis will attempt to answer the following research question:

Did Dutch voters cast their vote in the 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act based primarily on the subject matter of the referendum, or on decision-making shortcuts?

It has been said that heuristics use is so ubiquitous that we can expect them to be used by pretty much everyone (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). My main argument is that this does not mean they necessarily supersede factual knowledge of the referendum topic as the basis for vote choice.

It is worth mentioning that there is a normative side to the heuristics debate, because it relates to the desirability of putting political power into the hands of the public through elections and referendums. Some researchers have argued that information shortcuts are a decent substitute for political knowledge,

as they would allow voters to make the same decision they would have made if they had been fully informed (e.g. Lupia, 1994). But this view is far from universally accepted (e.g. Bartels, 1996), and the debate on the effectiveness of heuristics is ongoing. This matter of effectiveness falls outside of the scope of this project. It is only my intention to establish how heuristics affected vote choice in the Wiv 2017 referendum. I do not examine whether they are an effective replacement for factual knowledge, nor do I make any assertions regarding the desirability of their use.

In the following pages I will first review developments in the field of heuristics research in a more detailed manner. I will then go over my methodological choices, including case selection, the operationalization of my variables, and the hypotheses that follow from this. Next are the results of my logistic regressions, followed by a discussion of their implications in the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In the field of political behaviour studies, people's decision-making processes have received much attention. Most of these studies have focused on decision-making in elections, particularly choosing between individual candidates. This probably has something to do with the location that is most commonly studied: the United States, where people can elect presidents, senators and governors. While referendums and initiatives are held in the US, this happens only at the sub-national level. Especially California sees many state-level initiatives, which results in many studies focusing on this one state (e.g. Lupia, 1994).

There are significant differences between voting in elections and voting in referendums, as evaluating a policy is not the same thing as choosing a candidate. For that reason, findings on voting behaviour in elections cannot automatically be generalized to referendums (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). Given my focus on a Dutch referendum, it is also important to keep in mind the possible discrepancies between geographical areas with different political climates. Still, as American research has led to a number of landmark studies on the topic of voting behaviour, it makes for a good starting point.

General voting behaviour

The debate on voter competence has kept political scientists busy for decades. The main question is: can the median voter make good decisions? (e.g. Popkin, 1994; Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). The first step towards an answer is deciding what 'good' actually means in this context. Multiple definitions have been forwarded. For Bowler & Donovan (2000), a good voting decision is a vote that is consistent with the voter's beliefs, values or interests. Lupia (1994) defines a good vote as the same vote that someone would cast if they were fully informed about all relevant issues. Similarly, Redlawsk & Lau refer to a vote in accordance with fully informed preferences as a 'correct' choice (2013, following Dahl, 1989). As the vote of a fully informed voter is considered to be a relatively accurate measure of their preferences (Lupia, 1994b), these definitions are functionally comparable.

Much of the foundation for the contemporary debate regarding voter competence was laid by Campbell et al. in their 1960 book *The American Voter*. Herein, the titular voters receive significant criticism. The

book concludes that average voters do not measure up at all to the standards thought necessary for making proper political decisions (Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). Rather, they were found to lack the required knowledge, interest and overall capacity to collect and accurately process the information needed to hold their political representatives accountable. The view of the voting public as largely uninformed about most political issues has become a fixture in contemporary political science. Lau & Redlawsk describe it as "one of the best documented facts in all of the social sciences" (2001, p. 951).

Cues and shortcuts

While the image of largely uninformed voters may have persisted, the connection to people's capacity to make good choices has seen plenty of challenge. In the context of elections, it has been argued that voters do in fact reason about candidates and issues to the point that it allows them to make rational decisions (Popkin, 1994). They do this by using what is called "low-information rationality" (ibid., p. 7), also known as gut reasoning. This is a method that combines "learning and information from past experiences, daily life, the media, and political campaigns" (ibid., p. 7). In other words, people use information shortcuts and cues from a variety of sources to simplify the process of choosing their preferred candidate in an election. These shortcuts are often referred to as (cognitive) heuristics (Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). Following this view, voters are still uninformed. But they can nonetheless be competent decision-makers as well.

The idea that voters make use of heuristics to make their political decisions, has been widely adopted in political science (e.g. Sniderman, Brody & Tetlock, 1991; Lupia and McCubbins, 1998; Forehand, Gastil & Smith, 2006). Lau and Redlawsk even go as far as to say that using them is a necessity due to "severe limitations in human information processing" (2001, p. 954). This is perfectly compatible with the plethora of research that has concluded time and again that voters are uninformed or even ignorant: what is lacking, is large amounts of factual or 'encyclopaedic' knowledge of political issues. But the argument is that this is not the only route to good decision-making. Rather, badly informed voters can purportedly use information shortcuts to make the same choices they would make if they were well-informed. The benefit for these people lies in the opportunity costs associated with formulating a voting preference. Acquiring encyclopaedic knowledge is costly in terms of time and effort, so using shortcuts allows people to reduce their expenditure (Lupia, 1994).

While few researchers may doubt the widespread use of heuristics today, the optimistic perception of their effects is certainly not universal. Some research shows there are actually systematic discrepancies

between the votes people cast based on information shortcuts, and those they would have cast if they had been 'fully informed' (Bartels, 1996). There are also indications that the effects of heuristics may vary based on the characteristics of the person employing them. They would increase the probability of a correct vote for people with a high amount of political knowledge, while decreasing it for political novices (ibid.; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).

Regardless of their effectiveness, the use of heuristics by voters has been established for various types of voting opportunities. Some of the literature, especially in political psychology, focusses on the way heuristics are used in the process of political decision-making overall, and makes no distinction between candidate elections and direct democracy (e.g. Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). Other research focusses specifically on presidential elections (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), or direct legislation (Altman, 2011; Bowler & Donovan, 2000; Lupia, 1994). The latter approach is especially useful, because different political phenomena come with different possible cues and information shortcuts.

Decision-making in direct democracy

Where voter competence in general has been studied for well over a century, systematic research on this competence in the context of direct democracy only really got off the ground halfway through the 1900's. The results of initial studies were just as negative as the early findings on voter competence under representative democracy had been, if not more so. It was commonly concluded that people voted on proposals motivated by whims, or a desire to protest (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). This view was finally challenged by Magleby (1984), who was the first to systematically assess large amounts of opinion data that had not been available to earlier researchers. Since then, findings on how people make political decisions under direct democracy have been more in line with the modern perspective on electoral vote choice described above: people act as reasoning voters that substitute heuristics for complete information. These similarities are no coincidence, as the underlying logic is the same as well. The cognitive demands that would be placed on us if we were to seek complete information for every decision, are simply too high. Using shortcuts is a matter of necessity (Lupia & Matsusaka, 2004).

Despite these similarities, it is unlikely that heuristics use plays out in the exact same way under direct democracy. There are, after all, significant differences between voting in an election and voting in a referendum or for an initiative. For one, casting a vote in an election means choosing a preferred candidate or (implicitly) a preferred party, and each of these represents a collection of policy plans. In

other words, the choice is between policy packages rather than individual policies (Birch, 2011). On the other hand, direct democracy generally does revolve around deciding on singular policies. It is not uncommon for initiative ballots to include multiple reform propositions, but many American states have regulations in place that require initiative ballots to focus on a single subject (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). And when ballots do contain multiple proposals, international standards of good practice dictate that voters at least get the opportunity to accept or reject them all separately (Council of Europe, 2007). Regulations like this allows direct democracy to sidestep some of the elements that can complicate decision-making when picking a candidate for office.

Two worlds

Yet none of this is to say that deciding on a vote is easier in initiatives than it is in regular elections. Ballots can still be lengthy and complex, and they can contain multiple proposals that compete against each other. They can even intentionally be designed this way to confuse people into playing it safe by voting 'No' on every measure (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). But these issues apply mostly in the context of American direct democracy at the state level, where citizens can use the initiative to challenge legislators and their policies directly. This stands in contrast to the referendum as it is typically used in other democracies. Top-down initiated referendums, in the limited amount of countries where they exist, tend to be used under very different circumstances than those surrounding American initiatives. This has been described as the "two worlds" of the referendum (Qvortrup, 2005, p. 156). In the first world, governments must deal with the ever-present 'threat' of the initiative, which can force legislation against their will. Under those circumstances the aforementioned ways to confuse people into a negative vote make sense, as 'No' will generally be the outcome that legislators prefer. Initiatives tend to be subjected to strict regulations for the same reason (ibid.).

In the second world, we find the referendums. Most of them are initiated by governments.[1] Usually with the purpose of legitimising a controversial policy change (Qvortrup, 2005), but also to bypass institutions or resolve a political impasse (Altman, 2011). The main difference with the world of initiatives is that governments will generally aim for a Yes-vote, as the policy up for vote will typically be of their own design.

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[1] In which 'world' we can include the citizen-initiated referendum, is mostly a matter of definition. For example, Altman (2011) defines this category as including both initiatives, and referendums triggered by citizens. For clarity, I personally opt to keep the term separate from initiatives, which means that they refer only to referendums that challenge *government-sponsored* legislation. As such, for the purposes of this thesis they fit neatly into the second world of referendums.

As a result, referendum restrictions tend to be minimal (Qvortrup, 2005). Following this same logic, it makes sense to expect that these referendums feature clear and simple ballots, with a minimal number of propositions to vote on to avoid confusion. In practice this is usually the case (Bowler & Donovan, 2000).

There are some other characteristics of the second world of referendums that likely make it easier for citizens to formulate a voting preference, when compared to the world of initiatives. While referendums are used sparingly, when they *are* called, they are usually about highly visible and salient national issues. Referendum outcomes tend to have big, often constitutional consequences (Qvortrup, 2005). This is beneficial for the amount of information and information shortcuts that voters will have available to base their vote on: political parties and prominent public figures are likely to take positions, and debates will be held on a national scale (Bowler & Donovan, 2000).

Heuristics in elections

Regardless of this distinction between referendums and initiatives, voter competence under direct democracy has commonly faced even harsher judgements from political scientists than it has under the representative variety. In part this is because certain cues that are important during candidate elections are unavailable, or at least less accessible (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). Therefore, it seems "both unlikely and unreasonable to expect that voters will respond to proposition elections using exactly the same approach that they use in candidate elections" (ibid., p. 41). Still, some research suggests that "even given limited information, voting behaviour in ballot elections is similar to voting behaviour in candidate elections" (Branton, 2003, p. 367). The information shortcuts found to matter for elections therefore seem like a good place to start, provided it is evaluated to what extent they can make the transition to direct democracy.

Going over the types of heuristics that have been found to play a part in vote choice in American elections, five major categories have been identified by Lau & Redlawsk (2001). All of the following shortcuts give voters the opportunity to make 'cognitive savings' when deciding on their preferred political contender:

1. An important category is a candidate's <u>party affiliation</u>. Candidates for office usually are affiliated with a political party. In presidential elections for instance, they "stake out positions more-or-less consistent with the history of their respective parties, histories that developed over several previous elections" (Bowler & Donovan, 2000, p. 24). Thus, party connection can give

important clues about a candidate's political views. It can also be informative to evaluate the performance of fellow party members that held office in the past (ibid.).

2. The second is a candidate's <u>ideology</u>. This tends to be closely related to their party affiliation, but significant differences are certainly possible. Depending on the political culture, candidates don't necessarily always have to tow the party line on every issue. Someone's ideology is usually more difficult to discern than their party affiliation.

3. Then there are <u>endorsements</u>. These are signs of approval of or support for a candidate, coming from political or public figures and interest groups. Voters can defer judgement of a candidate to people or groups they value or identify with, saving cognitive effort. For example, an environmentally conscious voter can base his vote on which candidate is endorsed by some preferred environmental organization. Note that the term 'endorsement' is not meant to imply any formality. As long as voters can somehow infer a preference, this can be seen as an endorsement.

4. <u>Poll results</u> are also useful as information shortcuts. Especially when there are many options to choose from, polls can help to identify 'viable' candidates. These are candidates that have a reasonable chance of winning, which at least makes them worth considering. This allows voters to narrow down their choices.

5. Finally, there are <u>candidate appearances</u>, be they in the media or in public. Visual images are so pervasive that they are easy to overlook, but they provide voters with a large amount of information on, for instance, a candidate's charisma and likability. They also provide more basic information like gender, race and age, all of which can factor into voting choice (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001).

Heuristics in direct democracy

The above list of election heuristics clearly cannot be applied to referendums and initiatives in its entirety. The overall circumstances are significantly different, and some of the categories can only make sense when voters are tasked with deciding between people, rather than policies. Other categories require some adaptations in order to be compatible with direct democracy:

1. Policy proposals don't have a real <u>party affiliation</u> in the same way that politicians do. But parties generally do take a stance on these proposals, and they will announce this stance to the public. There is a connection here with <u>party identification</u>, which refers to the party preference of voters. It seems logical that a voter's opinion on a proposal will be similar to the stance of their preferred party, and indeed party identification at the individual level has been found to be consistently related to voting behaviour in the context of ballot propositions in American states (Branton, 2003). This contradicts earlier suggestions by Magleby (1984) that party identification would have little influence because ballot measures usually do not have a direct party link. Branton states that these results implicitly suggest that people "are able to pick up partisan 'cues' when they cast their votes in ballot elections" (2003, p. 376).

2. Policy plans don't have their own <u>ideology</u>. It can however be argued that for many policies, a connection with ideology can be made. For instance, in a referendum on the legalisation of abortion, a No-vote could be connected to conservative ideology, while a Yes-vote could be linked to liberal ideology. Still, for many topics this distinction is difficult to make, and there is considerable room for subjective interpretation.

3. <u>Endorsements</u> are compatible with direct democracy voting. Interest groups and public figures can endorse a policy in the same way that they can endorse a candidate or party. Indeed, in an oft-cited study, Lupia (1994) finds this type of heuristic to be very useful for ballot-initiative voters with little factual knowledge of the proposed initiative. Being aware of the preferences of certain interest groups (in Lupia's case: insurance industry lobbyists and trial lawyers) allowed them to emulate the voting behaviour of people who were relatively well-informed. As endorsements can also come from politicians or political parties, there is some overlap here with party affiliation. A party voicing its support for a certain policy can be argued to fit in both categories. For this analysis I choose to classify party endorsements under the party affiliation heuristic, leaving the endorsement category to other types of organizations and non-political individuals.

4. <u>Poll results</u> are theoretically usable as cues for direct legislation, but research on polls in this context is sparse. It has been suggested that the effect of polls on voting choice is bigger for referendums than it is for candidate elections (West, 1991). However, as mentioned above, other publications find that polls are useful in particular for narrowing down choices when many options

are available. They would allow voters to drop candidates that seemingly have no chance of winning (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). This logic suggests that this 'viability information' might affect direct democracy voting primarily in terms of voter turnout. The vast majority of referendums feature a binary choice, usually Yes or No (Altman, 2011). As such, when either option is significantly behind in the polls (i.e. not viable), its proponents have no real alternative voting option. This might dissuade some of them from voting at all, while some supporters of the 'winning' option might not show up due to believing that they have already won. This would be in line with the finding that polls tend to increase turnout when they indicate levels of support for election candidates are close together, but decrease it when they reveal bigger differences (Grosser & Schram, 2010).

5. Candidate appearances are obviously not directly applicable for policy proposals. They cannot make public appearances, nor do they have the human characteristics that make these appearances so important for politicians. However, particularly at the national level, referendums are usually preceded by a campaign period. This gives prominent supporters and opponents of a proposal the opportunity to make public or media appearances, in the same way that politicians can do this for their personal election campaigns.

Beyond these five types of heuristics, research focussed specifically on direct democracy points to some additional categories that voters can make use of:

6. Uncertainty or lack of clarity can lead voters to favour the status quo, which translates into voting 'No' for a given proposition. A No-votes becomes more likely when ballots are lengthy, and when the voter is uncertain about the likely effects of a policy plan (Bowler & Donovan, 2000; Budge, 2008).

7. Economic conditions have also been found to be influential. In the case of US state-level initiatives, poor economic performance is associated with more negative voting on ballot issues. Especially less-educated voters seem to decide on proposals (particularly, but not exclusively proposals related to economic policy) based on concerns about the economy in general, even if they are not familiar with the details of the proposition. When times are bad, these voters may be less willing to accept the risk that these propositions represent (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). The

opposite has been observed for referendums on European integration, which tend to pass during recessions. This has been explained as bad economic circumstances making voters willing to experiment (Qvortrup, 2005).

All in all, the literature on heuristics use in the context of direct democracy points to seven broad categories of information shortcuts that people can be expected to employ when voting in a referendum or initiative. This does not imply that every voter will always use shortcuts from all or even from one of these categories. Rather, these are the heuristics for which it has been established that their use is common among voters.

European research

European empirical studies into heuristics use are a relatively new phenomenon. They only started gaining traction around the beginning of this century (Hobolt, 2006). Understandably, much of this research uses insights garnered by American scholars as its foundation, and similarities between the two continents are clearly visible. European findings on voter ignorance, for example, reflect the pattern that was first established by Campbell et al. in *The American Voter* (1960): citizens generally lack political knowledge. And like in the US, these findings have been used on the other side of the Atlantic as an argument against direct democracy (Hobolt, 2007). The primary counterargument was also the same: voters do not necessarily need to be fully informed to make sensible political decisions, as they can make use of information shortcuts. The use of these heuristics by European voters has become the subject of a solid amount of research in the past two decades, including a segment dedicated to the unique circumstances of direct democracy (e.g. Christin et al., 2002; Milic, 2012; Nai, 2010).

Like in the United States, attention is not equally split between all possible cases. Scholars seem to have their preferences in terms of type and location. Regarding the former, much of the heuristics research is concentrated on referendums that are connected to European integration. These referendums deal with accession to the European Union and the acceptance of EU treaties, and in some European nations they are the only instances of direct democracy that have ever occurred. This type of referendum is well suited for comparative studies: treaties are generally voted on by the populations of multiple member states, which essentially means that the same referendum is held multiple times. This might partially explain their popularity as a research subject, although comparative studies of this kind are still relatively uncommon (Hobolt, 2006).

When it comes to location, Switzerland stands out as a popular subject for the study of direct democracy in Europe (e.g. Milic, 2012; Nai, 2010). This is not surprising, as it is the country that makes far and away the most use of direct democratic practices worldwide. Furthermore, it has been described as an ideal country for comparative research, due to the many varied ways in which this type of legislation is practiced and institutionalized (Altman, 2011). The analysis of heuristics use in Switzerland generally leads to conclusions that are in line with American research. For instance, knowledge of the position held by a preferred party helps Swiss voters with their voting choice (Nai, 2010), and information shortcuts overall make it easier for people to vote according to their true preferences (Milic, 2012).

The emphasis placed in the literature on Switzerland and referendums on EU integration, means that other cases of direct legislation in Europe get relatively little attention. Specifically, there is little known about the role of heuristics in national referendums that are not connected to the European Union. This literary gap is deserving of attention, as this kind of referendum differs from the two types described above in some fundamental ways.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature discussed above, I have formulated six hypotheses regarding how vote choice is affected by both referendum content and by four commonly used heuristics in the context of the Dutch referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act. However, the specifics of these hypotheses follow directly from my methodological choices, which are discussed in the following chapter. For this reason, a listing of my hypotheses can be found after the methodology section.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research into the role of cognitive heuristics in direct democracy voting has seen a wide variety of setups, but there are some recurring overarching elements. When it comes to establishing either the use of cues or their effectiveness, employing some form of regression analysis is common. For instance, Lupia uses multivariate logit regression models in his landmark study *Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias* (1994), wherein he examines whether certain information shortcuts allow less informed voters to vote in initiatives as if they were well-informed. Bowler & Donovan similarly employ regression analyses to examine the use of cues in referendum voting in their influential book *Demanding Choices* (2000).

It should be noted that studies on the use of information shortcuts generally don't directly measure the use of a hypothesized heuristic. Rather, their use is often inferred through the testing of models of impression formation. A significant result in the regression analysis of these models is then interpreted as evidence of heuristic processing (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Models can be tested based on the results of experiments wherein the availability of cues is controlled and manipulated. An alternative to experimental setups is the use of survey data, in which case the survey questions are used to infer whether respondents made use of certain cues. Lupia's *Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias* (1994) is again a prominent example here. Lupia uses surveys to establish whether Californian voters are aware of the positions held by certain interest groups regarding an initiative on insurance reform. The stances of these groups are examples of the endorsement heuristic. The surveys measure voters' knowledge of these positions by asking the respondents to identify them. Identifying them correctly is assumed to imply use of the endorsement cue.

Surveys are also a popular tool for research on heuristics and direct democracy in Europe. Their use is especially common in the analysis of referendum voting in Switzerland. This is presumably in part because VOX surveys (currently named FORS) have been conducted after each Swiss federal vote since 1977, which ensures that survey data is readily available to political scientists. Instances of its use can be found in Nai (2010), and Milic (2012), who both utilize them to examine whether heuristics can aid Swiss voters in casting a correct vote (i.e. the same vote they would have cast if they had been fully informed). Surveys are also employed in a different European context by Hobolt (2007), who analyses cue-taking by Norwegian voters in the 1994 referendum on EU membership.

The popularity of surveys in heuristics research mirrors their popularity in political science as a whole. Scientific surveys are the most commonly used research method in the field (Brady, 2000). They have attained this position due to the significant advantages that their use offers, including their wide range of applicability, strong linkage to theory, their capacity for conceptual richness and theory confirmation, and policy relevance (ibid.). On the other hand, surveys are also criticized for lacking the level of control that is possible in an experimental setup. Experiments often allows for the presence of a control group. They are also well suited for analysis of the effects of stimuli, as manipulation of a stimulus is usually far easier under controlled circumstances than it would be in the natural world (Brady, 2000). Still, over time a strong focus on the experimental method within the social sciences has made way for a broader range of approaches to research, including the use of surveys. This is primarily because many research topics simply don't allow researchers to manipulate all relevant variables in a way that accurately reflects reality (Punch, 2011). For this reason, Brady states that the findings from such 'laboratory' experiments have limited usefulness, as these setups 'can seldom capture the full range of citizens' views and the variety of political stimuli found in the real world' (2000, p. 52).

While both survey data and an experimental setup can theoretically be used for the purpose of studying the role of heuristics in European referendum voting, it is exactly this potential to examine a wide range of political stimuli that makes the use of surveys a good fit for this research project. My aim is to gain insight into how cues influence voting choice in European national referendums. As I have identified seven main categories of information shortcuts that could be relevant, my approach needs to accommodate for as many of these categories as possible. It would be extremely difficult to create a 'laboratory' setup that can give participants access to such a varied collection of cues in a natural way. Surveys however, can capture this broad range of possibilities, as long as the list of survey questions is comprehensive enough.

Another point of consideration is timing. To ensure that people recall their motivations as accurately as possible, the survey must ideally be conducted right after a referendum is held. Rather than waiting for a new referendum to take place, it is more practical to make use of an existing survey that meets this criterium. Professionally collected survey data is available for analysis, but only a small part of it is fit for this project. Aside from the aforementioned importance of timing, a usable survey must meet two other conditions. First, the survey must be linked to a referendum that is representative of the type I am interested in: national referendums in a European country (excluding Switzerland). Second, I must be able to measure the variables of interest through the available survey questions, as this method obviously does

not allow me to formulate questions of my own. The CentERdata survey on the Dutch 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act meets all of these conditions. I will expand on this below.

3.1 - Case selection

The Intelligence and Security Services Act (Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten, or Wiv) describes the legal authority and competences allotted to the Dutch intelligence agencies: the AIVD (civil) and the MIVD (military). In 2017 the Dutch parliament voted in favour of a plan to update the law, arguing that technological advancements had made the contemporary version outdated. The new version, the Wiv 2017, primarily made changes to the rules surrounding data surveillance and collection, including the conditions under which mass surveillance is allowed ("Nieuwe Wet op de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten", 2017). The Consultative Referendum Act (Wet raadgevend referendum) made it possible for Dutch citizens to call a non-binding referendum on adopted legislation, provided that at least 300.000 signatures were collected within six weeks. Five students from the University of Amsterdam launched a campaign to trigger a referendum on the Wiv 2017. Enough signatures were gathered, and the referendum was held on 21 March 2018. Municipal elections were held on the same day ("Raadgevend referendum over 'aftapwet'", 2017). Around 49.5 percent of voters cast a No-vote, while 46.5 percent voted in favour.

I consider the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act to be a useful case to examine heuristics use in the context of direct democracy. This can be practically demonstrated by comparing it to an earlier Dutch case: the Ukraine Association Agreement referendum, which was held in 2016. A significant difference between the two is the complexity of the subject matter. The Association Agreement is a treaty between the European Union and Ukraine, which had to be ratified by all EU member states. As mentioned earlier, EU referendums tend to revolve around complicated subjects that the average voter knows little about (Hobolt, 2007). This certainly holds for the Ukraine Agreement, a highly technical 323-page document that establishes terms of cooperation across a multitude of areas, including economic policy, judicial matters and energy infrastructure. The subject of the Wiv 2017 referendum is far less complex by comparison. It concerns a clearly demarcated (mostly) national matter that is connected to conceivable concepts like security and privacy. As heuristics allow for cognitive savings, it stands to reason that their use increases as information requirements rise. Consequently, I suspect that heuristics were far

less important for vote choice in the referendum on the Wiv, than they were for the vote on the Ukraine Association Agreement. This shows why the Wiv referendum can be considered a 'least-likely' case for the examination of the importance of heuristics in direct democracy voting. A least-likely case, when it is found to support a hypothesis, provides the highest degree of support that a single case can give (Gerring, 2007). This is because the specifics of the case provide a particularly high hurdle for the theory to clear. As the relatively straightforward subject matter of the Wiv referendum made for low information requirements, I believe substituting heuristics for factual knowledge may not have been vital for many voters. This makes for a critical test of the popular notion that voters are ignorant and heuristics use is ubiquitous. If the limitations of human information processing ensure that cognitive heuristics are used by virtually everyone (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), then we can expect to find support for this even in this least-likely scenario.

Representativity

The argument could be made that the referendum on the Wiv 2017 Act does not seem to be very representative of national referendums in Europe, as it is an extraordinary occurrence in the realm of direct democracy: it is citizen-initiated, non-binding and reactive, which makes for an almost unique combination of characteristics described by Altman as a 'consultative referendum' (2011). It is the second of its kind globally, with the first one also being held in the Netherlands two years earlier (regarding the Ukraine treaty). Despite this uniqueness however, I believe it is still a fitting case to study the use of heuristics in European national referendums. One reason for this is that there is no indication that its peculiarities significantly influence voting behaviour. When it comes to the topic of heuristics, researchers generally make little distinction between the different types of referendums, including whether they are top-down or citizen-initiated, and binding or consultative. For example, in their analysis of Swiss voters, Christin et al. (2002) examine facultative and obligatory referendums, initiatives and counterproposals together. Hobolt (2007) bases hypotheses on voters in EU referendums on findings regarding Californian initiatives, and many scholars generalize in a similar way. The literature overall seems to allow for this, as the differences between these referendum types are never hypothesized to affect either the use of heuristics, or their effectiveness.

It is also of note that, while this referendum represents a *combination* of characteristics that is almost unique (citizen-initiated, non-binding and reactive), individually these characteristics are more common. Citizen-initiated referendums are not as popular as the top-down variety, and were held only about half

as often between 1984 and 2009. Switzerland accounted for more than fifty percent of them. Nonetheless, in that same period, Europe also saw their use in Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine (Altman, 2011). Consultative (or non-binding) referendums have been held in multiple European countries, including France, the United Kingdom, Finland and Spain. The first Dutch referendum, held in 2005, was also consultative (De Vreese, 2007). Finally, reactive referendums have seen use in only a few European countries. This method of challenging existing legislation is regularly employed in Switzerland and Italy, but beyond that only in Denmark and recently in the Netherlands (Setala, 1999). Legislature allowing for a reactive referendum, while having gone unused so far, also exists in Albania, Malta and Russia (Council of Europe, 2005).

Based on the above, I do not believe that examining the Wiv referendum will lead to problems with representativeness. Furthermore, this case being the second national referendum in two years means that the first one is still relatively fresh in the minds of voters. The last Dutch referendum before 2016 was held eleven years prior, and the 2016 Ukraine Association Agreement referendum was the first of its kind in the Netherlands. This has implications for its generalizability, as people who are unfamiliar with referendums might seek out information in an atypical manner. While I am unaware of any research existing that can either confirm or deny this, I posit that it is best to err on the side of caution. The Ukraine referendum allowed voters to get (re)accustomed to direct democracy. Such a 'trial run' likely makes the 2018 referendum more representative, and therefore the preferable choice for analysis.

3.2 - Survey data

For this project I make use of data from the LISS panel (Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social sciences), administered by the CentERdata research institute associated with the Tilburg University. The entire panel consists of 7000 members from 4500 households. Selection occurred through a true probability sample, drawn from the population register by Statistics Netherlands (CentERdata, n.d.). The LISS panel is available for projects by researchers and policy makers. The SKON foundation (Stichting Kiezersonderzoek Nederland) made use of the panel for its analysis of the 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act by conducting three waves of surveys on the topic. The first two waves took place before the referendum, while wave three started one day after the vote was held. This thesis uses the results from the post-referendum wave. Of the 7000 LISS panel members, 2838 people

were invited to participate in this third survey. 2234 respondents filled it out completely, making for a response rate of 78,7% (Mulder, 2018). The post-referendum survey consists of 30 questions, many of which are divided into sub-questions. The questions focus on voting behaviour, views and attitudes on the Wiv referendum, as well as more general opinions on political and social issues. Background characteristics like age, gender and education level are also included in the dataset.

The use of pre-existing survey data comes with the drawback of making it impossible for me to formulate my own survey questions. As a result, variables of interest must be measured through questions that were not explicitly devised for this purpose. In the following section I describe if and (in most cases) how these variables can be measured through use of the Wiv referendum survey data. The first necessary step is to narrow down the pool of respondents to just the people who actually cast a vote in the referendum. While the differences between respondents who did and did not vote would be interesting for research into voter turnout, my focus is on vote choice. This refers specifically to the process of deciding *which* vote to cast, not whether to vote at all. Survey respondents were asked directly whether or not they voted, with three possible answers (*1. Did vote / 2. Did not vote / 3. Was not allowed to vote*). Only the 1650 people that answered 1 here, are included in the analysis.

3.3 - Dependent variable

As my intention is to discover whether people primarily based their vote choice in the Dutch Wiv referendum on the referendum content, or on their use of certain heuristics, my dependent variable is people's individual voting choice. This choice was made in the shape of an answer to the following official referendum question: *Are you for or against the Intelligence and Security Services Act 2017?* The possible answers were '*for*', '*against*', or a blank vote.

Survey respondents were asked about their referendum vote directly, with three possible answers (*1. Voted in favour / 2. Voted against / 3. Voted blank*). Respondents who chose answer 3 are not included in the analysis. I have considered the possibility of including blank votes through use of a multinomial, rather than a binary logit model. However, blank votes make up less than five percent of the whole sample. When one category of the dependent variable in logistic regression has significantly fewer cases than the other(s), this can lead to biased estimates (King & Zeng, 2001). Due to this, I decided to be cautious by

limiting the sample to only the Yes-votes and No-votes. This brings the baseline number of respondents to 1574. Note that this is only the theoretical maximum amount that can be used for the estimations. Missing and excluded answers to relevant survey questions lead to lower sample sizes. The exact number for each model is noted in the results.

3.4 - Independent variables

My first independent variable is the vote that respondents 'should' cast, based on their personal views on the Wiv 2017 Act. Furthermore, in my theoretical framework I described seven categories of heuristics that can be expected to influence people's voting choice in the context of direct democracy. Four of these information shortcuts can be examined with survey questions that measure strongly related variables. They are: (1) *party affiliation & identification*, (2) *endorsements*, (3) *favouring the status quo*, and (4) *economic conditions*. These four heuristics constitute the remaining independent variables. The final three categories, *ideology*, *poll results* and *candidate appearances*, cannot be measured with the data I have available. As such, they are necessarily left out of my analysis.

Respondents' personal views: the Want-variable

The purpose of this variable is to discern what a respondent's vote on the Wiv referendum should be, according to their views on the Wiv 2017 Act. These views are established through the answers that respondents give to four questions in the referendum survey. Each question features a statement:

a. *The Dutch intelligence agencies should be given more competences to fight terrorism and crime.*

b. *The law contains enough guarantees to prevent innocent citizens from being wiretapped en masse.*

c. *The Intelligence and Security Services Act harms the privacy of citizens*

d. *The intelligence agencies Presently have sufficient possibilities to intercept communications or to break into computers and other electronic devices.*

For each statement, respondents are asked to what extent they agree with it. There are six possible answers (*1. Disagree completely / 2. Disagree / 3. Neither agree nor disagree / 4. Agree / 5. Agree completely / 6. Don't know*). Based on the content of the Wiv 2017 Act, which expands the competences

of the intelligence agencies, agreement with the first two statements should correspond with support for the new Wiv. Similarly, agreement with the latter two statements should correspond with opposition to it. By combining a respondent's answer for each statement, a new variable can be created. This denotes what stance a survey participant 'should' take on the Wiv, and thus what they should want their referendum vote to be. The calculation of this variable, named 'Want', works as follows:

- Each answer given (aside from 'Don't know') corresponds to a 'score' that is equal to the number of the answer, ranging from 1 for 'Disagree completely' to 5 for 'Agree completely'.

- The scores for statements a and b are combined, which gives a number between 2 and 10. The higher this number is, the more in favour of the Wiv 2017 Act a participant should be, as a higher score denotes a higher level of agreement with pro-Wiv statements.

- The scores for statements c and d are also combined. Only here, a higher score should correspond to more opposition to the Wiv 2017 Act, as these two statements are anti-Wiv.

- Subtrackting the second score from the first results in a number between 8 and -8. This is the value of a participant's Want-variable. The closer a score gets to 8, the more the participant should be in favour of the Wiv 2017 Act. The closer to -8, the more they should be opposed to it.

- A 'Don't know' answer is interpreted as neutral, meaning it will be counted as 'Neither agree nor disagree' with a score of 3.

As an example for clarification, a fictional survey respondent could give the following answers to the four statements: a. *5. Agree completely*, b. *5. Agree completely*, c. *1. Disagree completely*, d. *1. Disagree completely*. Their score on the Want-variable becomes: $(5 + 5) - (1 + 1) = 8$, the highest possible score, implying that it is very likely that they are in favour of the Wiv 2017 Act.

Heuristic 1. Party affiliation & identification

Due to the connection between party affiliation and party identification, I take the two together as a single 'party variable'. This heuristic can be interpreted as people basing their referendum vote on the position of the political party they support and identify with. While the referendum survey does not directly ask about respondents' party identification, a proxy question can be used. This question asks respondents which party they would vote for if Second Chamber elections were to be held 'today'. It can reasonably

be assumed that most people will vote for the party they support. Also, as the survey was conducted starting on the day after the referendum, it seems unlikely that any significant portion of the respondents would have altered their preference since their referendum vote.

The proxy survey question has 19 possible answers (*1-13. All parties represented in the Second Chamber at the time of the survey / 14. A different party, as specified by the respondent / 15-19. Blank vote, no vote cast or non-committal answer*). Only participants that chose a represented party (1-13) are included in the analysis. To compare the votes of survey participants to the stances of their preferred political parties, I use the official votes cast by these parties on the Wiv 2017 act in the Second Chamber. The parties and their votes are shown in Table 1 below. These two elements together allow me to measure whether people who support a pro-Wiv 2017 party voted significantly differently in the referendum from people who support a party that is against the act.

Table 1: Votes cast by political parties in the Second Chamber on the Wiv 2017 Act, The Netherlands, 2017

Political party	Wiv 2017 vote
VVD	For
CDA	For
D66	Against
PVV	For
SP	Against
PvdA	For
GroenLinks	Against
ChristenUnie	For
PvdD	Against
SGP	For
50PLUS	For
DENK	Against
Forum voor Democratie	Against

Source: I&O Research, 2017

Heuristic 2. Endorsements

While endorsements can potentially come from anyone, I believe that they are more likely to have a significant impact when they come from people or groups that are both well-known and have a connection to the voting subject. This connection can simply be that a person or organization played a significant or even dominating role in the public debate leading up to the vote. A series of questions in the referendum survey focusses on one individual and four organizations that all featured prominently in the debate on the Wiv 2017 Act. For instance, comedian Arjen Lubach is considered to have played a vital role in making the referendum possible. The required 300.000 signatures were unlikely to be collected in time, until his TV show gave the matter a massive publicity boost (van Lonkhuyzen, 2017). The survey questions measure whether respondents are familiar with this person/these organizations, to what extent the respondents trust them, and if respondents are aware of their stance on the Wiv.

By combining the answers to these sub-questions, five new variables are created that reflect whether respondents both (a) trusted each of the five 'influencers' (for lack of a better term), and (b) were aware of their stance on the Wiv 2017 Act. This combination of factors is counted as a proxy for awareness of an endorsement from a trusted source. These variables are then used to analyse whether participants who were aware of such endorsements, voted significantly differently in the referendum from people who were not aware of them. Note that for the purpose of this analysis, both a positive and a negative stance towards the new Wiv is interpreted as a kind of endorsement: an organisation publicly voicing opposition to the Wiv can be seen as endorsing a No-vote, i.e. endorsing the status quo. Table 2 displays the stances held by each of the five influencers.

Table 2: Prominent participants in the public debate on the Wiv 2017 Act, The Netherlands, 2017/2018

Influencer	Function / profession	Stance on Wiv 2017 Act
AIVD	Dutch intelligence agency	Positive
Amnesty International	Human rights NGO	Negative
Arjen Lubach	Comedian / TV personality	Negative
Bits of Freedom	Digital rights foundation	Negative
NVJ	National journalism association	Negative

Source: AIVD, 2018; Amnesty International, n.d.; Bits of Freedom, n.d.; NVJ, 2018; van Lonkhuyzen, 2017

In the survey, participants are asked first whether they are familiar with the organisations and person mentioned above. A separate Yes/No answer is possible for each. They are then asked to what extent they trust each of these five influencers, excluding the ones that they are not familiar with according to the previous question. There are twelve possible answers for each influencer (*0-10. Level of trust on a 0 to 10 scale / 11. No opinion*). The subsequent questions ask whether participants know each influencer's stance on the Wiv, with five separate Yes/No answers possible. The final questions in the series then ask them to name this stance for each influencer they answered 'Yes' to. Five separate For/Against answers are possible here.

Respondents are considered to be aware of an influencer's endorsement when they both (a) gave a trust-rating between 6 and 10 to the influencer, and (b) stated their stance on the Wiv 2017 Act correctly. For example: a respondent who rated his trust in Arjen Lubach at an 8 and correctly stated that Lubach is against the new Wiv, meets these criteria. People who meet just one or neither of the criteria, are counted as not aware of the endorsement.

Heuristic 3. Favouring the status quo

There is some indication that favouring the status quo, i.e. preferring the option that leaves the current situation unchanged, is a consequence of people feeling uncertain about the effects of a proposition (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). I measure this through a question in the referendum survey that asks respondents to react to the following statement: *There was insufficient information available regarding the Intelligence and Security Services Act*. There are six possible answers (*1. Disagree completely / 2. Disagree / 3. Neither agree nor disagree / 4. Agree / 5. Agree completely / 6. Don't know*).

I assume that people who found the information available on the Wiv to be insufficient, probably felt that they did not know what they needed to know about this subject. Respondents who answered 3, 4 or 5 are considered to be a part of this group. *Neither agree nor disagree* is included because it indicates that the respondent at least was not entirely convinced that the available information was adequate. *Don't know*, on the other hand, implies that no attempt to find information was made at all. As the implications of this answer are ambiguous, I opt not to include it in the analysis.

Heuristic 4. Economic conditions

National economic conditions are a country-level variable, which means that they are identical for all survey respondents. A related variable that can differ per person is employment status. It is theorized that economic hard times in a country lead people to uncertainty about the future, which makes them unwilling to deal with the risk of new policies (Bowler & Donovan, 2000). Unemployment can cause uncertainty in the same way, as people might worry about their ability to pay bills, the rent, or a mortgage. For this reason, I use employment status as a proxy for economic conditions.

This variable is measured in the Wiv referendum survey in the background characteristics section. There are fourteen possible answers (*1-3. Various types of payed employment / 4-6. Various types of unemployment / 7. Student / 8. Homemaking / 9. Retirement / 10. (partial) Incapacity for work / 11. Volunteer work + on benefits / 12. Volunteer work / 13. Other / 14. Too young*). Answers 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 are counted as unemployment. Respondents who chose answers 13 or 14 are not included in the analysis. These people cannot be accurately classified, or are too young to vote in a referendum, respectively.

3.5 - Unused heuristics

While the following three heuristic categories are likely to be relevant for direct democracy, the survey data that I use for this project does not allow me to examine them with sufficient accuracy. Because of this, they are not included in my analysis.

Ideology

The Wiv 2017 Act contains a collection of measures that cannot easily be connected to one particular ideology. Even an attempt to broadly place the law somewhere on the left-right political spectrum faces some difficulties. Intuitively, the Wiv seems to mostly fit a right-wing ideology due to its emphasis on national security. But increasing the competences of the intelligence agencies is just one part of the act. Also included is the establishment of a committee that will check if the use of these competences is justified (Referendumcommissie, 2018). In this way, privacy is also a significant component of the new Wiv, complicating its ideological classification. More importantly: exactly what left- and right-wing ideology actually entails, is far from set in stone (Heywood, 2015). As the Wiv referendum survey also

does not directly measure the ideology of respondents, I cannot include this variable in my analysis. Since ideology is closely related to party affiliation and party identification (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), I believe this exclusion will not lead to any significant oversights in my results.

Poll results

The Wiv referendum survey does not feature questions that directly measure respondents' exposure to opinion polls, nor does it include questions that could serve as a proxy for this metric. However, as mentioned in the literature review, I suspect that polls in the context of direct democracy voting primarily influence voter turnout rates, rather than the vote decision. The referendum on the Wiv 2017 Act was formulated in a standard way: a single question with two possible answers ('For' and 'Against'). For that reason, the main heuristic function of opinion polls, narrowing down choices by showing which of them are viable (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), is not relevant in this case. While it would certainly be useful to test how this assumption holds up, I do not believe that the inability to do so will detract significantly from the value of my findings.

Candidate appearances

Research indicates that the heuristic function of candidate appearances is based on what they reveal about the personal characteristics of these candidates. This includes simple descriptive information like age and race, but also things like charisma, all of which can factor into which candidate a voter comes to prefer (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). In the context of direct democracy, it is possible that appearances made by opponents and supporters of a proposition fulfil a similar function.

The Wiv referendum survey contains a few questions that pertain to this topic, but they only measure to what extent respondents have seen or heard of these appearances. These questions do not suffice as a proxy, as they are far too broad. Knowing, for instance, that a survey participant has seen a proponent of the Wiv 2017 Act on television, reveals nothing about how they were influenced by the looks and behaviour of this proponent.

3.6 - Descriptives

The descriptive statistics for each of the variables are noted in table 3.

- The dependent variable *Vote choice* refers to the referendum vote cast by respondents, with values of 1 and 0 equalling a Yes- and No-vote, respectively.

- The independent *Want-variable* denotes respondents' personal views regarding the Wiv 2017 Act. A higher score corresponds to a more positive stance towards the new Wiv.

- The heuristic categories *party affiliation & identification*, *favouring the status quo* and *economic conditions* are all represented by one independent variable each. Five variables exist for the *endorsements* heuristic, each corresponding to an endorser. All heuristics and endorsers are coded as dummy variables. A value of 1 implies that the associated heuristic is used, while a value of 0 implies that it is not.

- The included control variables are *age, sex* and *education level*. *Sex* is coded as a dummy variable, with males coded as 1 and females coded as 0. *Education level* is an ordinal variable with six possible values, ranging from elementary education to university education.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the Wiv referendum survey

	Valid N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard deviation
Vote choice	1574	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.50
Want-variable	1569	-8.00	8.00	0.48	3.15
Heuristic 1: Party affiliation	1266	0.00	1.00	0.57	0.50
Heuristic 2: Endorsements					
Amnesty International	1568	0.00	1.00	0.34	0.47
Arjen Lubach	1568	0.00	1.00	0.25	0.43
Bits of Freedom	1568	0.00	1.00	0.11	0.31
NVJ	1568	0.00	1.00	0.10	0.29
AIVD	1568	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.50
Heuristic 3: Status quo	1409	0.00	1.00	0.60	0.49
Heuristic 4: Economic conditions	1571	0.00	1.00	0.07	0.26
Age	1574	18.00	100.00	55.40	17.20
Sex	1574	0.00	1.00	0.48	0.50
Education	1532	1.00	6.00	3.95	1.41

Source: CentERdata, 2018

3.7 - Empirical model

The complete formal model for my logistic regressions is noted below. This model is only used in its entirety for the final regression. The models for the other estimations are nested in it.

$$\ln\left(\frac{P_{yes-vote}}{1-P_{yes-vote}}\right) = b_0 + b_1\text{Want}_i + b_2\text{Party}_i + b_3(\text{Endorsement})_i$$

$$+ b_4\text{StatusQuo}_i + b_5\text{Economy}_i + b_6\text{Age}_i + b_7\text{Male}_i + b_8\text{Education}_i$$

Vote choice is found on the left side of the equation. *Want* stands for the Want-variable. *Party*, *(Endorsement)*, *StatusQuo* and *Economy* stand for the four heuristics: party affiliation & identification, endorsements, favouring the status quo and economic conditions, respectively. *(Endorsement)* denotes a separate variable for each of the five endorsers. The control variables sex and education level are denoted by *Male* and *Education*, respectively.

The first estimation only includes the Want-variable and the three control variables:

$$\ln\left(\frac{P_{yes-vote}}{1-P_{yes-vote}}\right) = b_0 + b_1\text{Want}_i + b_2\text{Age}_i + b_3\text{Male}_i + b_4\text{Education}_i$$

The subsequent estimations each include one of the four heuristics, in addition to the Want-variable and the control variables:

$$\ln\left(\frac{P_{yes-vote}}{1-P_{yes-vote}}\right) = b_0 + b_1\text{Want}_i + b_2(\text{Heuristic})_i + b_3\text{Age}_i + b_4\text{Male}_i$$

$$+ b_5\text{Education}_i$$

The final estimation employs the full model mentioned above. All four heuristics are estimated simultaneously, along with the Want-variable and the control variables.

Hypotheses

The independent Want-variable gives an indication of the vote that survey participants 'should' have cast in the Wiv referendum, based on their stances on four statements regarding the content of the Wiv 2017 Act. A higher score on this variable corresponds to a more positive view on the new Wiv, and vice versa. The dependent variable is the actual referendum vote cast by each respondent. It can logically be expected that the more positive a respondent's view on the Wiv Act is, the more likely they are to want the act to pass. As such, I expect there to be a statistically highly significant positive correlation between the vote cast, and the Want-variable. This leads me to my first hypothesis:

H$_1$: *The more positively voters judged the content of the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Act, the more likely they were to cast a Yes-vote in the 2018 referendum on the Wiv Act.*

It seems very likely that I will find support for this hypothesis. In itself, finding this support also does not seem to lead to major new insights. The purpose of this part of the analysis is primarily to test the validity of the Want-variable. Once this is established, the next step is to add the four heuristic categories as control variables. A separate analysis is conducted for each heuristic, which allows me to examine their effects individually. Based on the important role played by heuristics in political decision-making overall (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001), and the importance of these particular categories under other types of direct democracy (ibid.; Bowler & Donovan, 2000), I expect to find that the heuristic variables will reach significance, even though the Want-variable is present as a control variable. This leads me to four more hypotheses.

The first heuristic to be added is party affiliation and party identification. For referendums on European integration, party endorsements, a functionally very similar type of cue, have been found to play a significant role (Hobolt, 2007). I expect to find the same for national non-EU referendums, which makes for the following hypothesis:

H$_2$: *People who support a party that voted in favour of the Wiv 2017 Act, were significantly more likely to cast a Yes-vote in the Wiv referendum than the people who support a party that voted against the act.*

The second heuristic category is endorsements, with five corresponding variables. All of them are connected to endorsements by non-political entities, which is a category that has seen little research. Still, as various elite cues have been found to matter in determining the outcome of EU integration referendums (Hobolt, 2006), I expect that endorsements by people other than politicians can fulfil a similar function. I also anticipate that this will hold up for non-EU referendums. As such, my hypothesis is as follows:

H3: *People who were aware of an endorsement regarding the new Wiv by a relevant public figure or organization, voted significantly differently in the 2018 referendum on the Wiv Act from those who were unaware of such an endorsement.*

The third information shortcut is favouring the status quo. Uninformed Swiss citizens have been found to vote against measures more often if they imply a change to the status quo (Christin et al., 2002). While the uniquely dominant role of direct democracy in Switzerland makes these findings not immediately translatable to other European nations per se, I do expect to find similar results for this analysis. My hypothesis:

H4: *Voters who were unsure about the effects that the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Act will have, were significantly more likely to cast a No-vote in the 2018 referendum on the Wiv Act than voters who believed they had enough information about the new Wiv.*

The final heuristic to be examined is economic conditions. Bowler & Donovan (2000) have found that economic considerations can factor into voting choice even when the subject of a referendum or proposal is itself not economic in nature. The explanation for this is that some voters will be unwilling to deal with the uncertainty that the measure might nevertheless represent. This leads to my hypothesis:

H5: *Voters who faced economic uncertainty due to unemployment, were significantly more likely to cast a No-vote in the 2018 referendum on the Wiv Act than voters who were employed.*

For my final analysis I will simultaneously include all four heuristic categories as variables. When all four of them are controlled for, I expect that the Want-variable will lose its significance. This would signal that the content of the new Wiv Act was of secondary importance to referendum voters when making their

vote choice. Rather, their choices were primarily made based on at least one of four commonly employed types of information shortcuts. In other words:

H$_6$: *When important heuristics are factored in, how voters judge the content of the 2017 Intelligence and Security Services Act did not significantly influence what vote they cast in the 2018 referendum on the Wiv Act.*

Results

Tables 4 through 10 report the results of my model estimations.

Multicollinearity

Each of the models was checked for correlation between the independent variables. Problems can be expected to arise at tolerance values below 0.1 and VIF values above 10 (Field, 2013). Across all estimations, the lowest value found for tolerance is 0.73. All VIF values lie between 1.01 and 1.37. This leads me to conclude that collinearity is not an issue for any of the models. A list of tolerance and VIF values for all variables can be found in the appendix.

Views on referendum content

Table 4: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: no heuristics	Voting choice
Intercept	-1.86***
	(0.44)
Want-variable	1.31***
	(0.07)
Age	0.02***
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.10
	(0.18)
Education	0.01
	(0.06)
Wald $\chi 2$	0.05
Cox & Snell R^2	0.57

Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1527
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

My first regression analysis features only the Want-variable and the control variables, but no heuristics. The Want-variable, which stands for the content of the referendum, is highly significant at the p=0.001 level. These findings offer support for hypothesis 1: the more positive someone's opinion is regarding the content of the Wiv 2017 Act, the more likely they were to vote 'Yes' in the referendum (controlling for age, sex and level of education). More specifically, the positive relationship implies that a higher Want-score correlates with higher predicted log-odds (and by extension: a higher predicted probability) of a Yes-vote. The odds ratio is 3.71, which indicates that the predicted odds of a Yes-vote increase 3.71 times for each point increase of a voter's Want-score (again, controlling for age, sex and education level). These results are a good sign for the validity of my model, as the theoretical link between vote choice and the Want-variable is very strong.

Regarding the control variables, only age manages to reach significance, as it does in most of the subsequent estimations. This implies that as people get older, the predicted probability increases that they will vote 'Yes' in the referendum. The predicted odds of a Yes-vote increase 1.02 times per additional year of age.

Party affiliation & identification

Table 5: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: heuristic 1	Voting choice
Intercept	-2.35***
	(0.52)
Want-variable	1.32***
	(0.08)
Heuristic 1: Party affiliation	0.62**
	(0.21)
Age	0.02**
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.35
	(0.21)
Education	0.02
	(0.52)
Wald $\chi 2$	3.21
Cox & Snell R^2	0.59

Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1233
* *p* < 0.05; ** *p* < 0.01; *** *p* < 0.001; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

The first heuristic that is included for estimation is party affiliation & identification. I find this heuristic to be significant at the *p*=0.01 level. This implies that, controlling for people's opinion on the referendum content (along with their age, sex, and level of education), supporting a party that voted in favour of the Wiv 2017 Act predicts a higher probability of a Yes-vote in the referendum. The predicted odds of a Yes-vote for supporters of a pro-Wiv party are 1.86 times greater than the predicted odds for a supporter of a party that voted against it. As such, these findings provide support for hypothesis 2. It would be rash to interpret this result as conclusive evidence that people look to their preferred party to decide their referendum vote. However, as voters' opinions on the referendum content are controlled for, it does suggest that party alignment plays a role of importance in this decision.

The inclusion of this first heuristic does not influence the significance of the Want-variable. It also has very little influence on the size of its coefficient. It appears that this type of information shortcut, while relevant for voters, is not influential enough to take precedence over their personal views regarding what the

referendum is factually about. The following estimations will show that the robustness of the Want-variable is a consistent phenomenon.

Endorsements

Table 6: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: heuristic 2	Voting choice				
	Amnesty Int.	A. Lubach	B.o.F.	NVJ	AIVD
Intercept	-1.88***	-1.82***	-1.91***	-1.91***	-1.87***
	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.44)
Want-variable	1.32***	1.30***	1.31***	1.31***	1.32***
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Heur. 2: Endorsements					
Amnesty International[a]	-0.65**				
	(0.20)				
Arjen Lubach[a]		-0.53*			
		(0.22)			
Bits of Freedom[a]			-1.24***		
			(0.32)		
NVJ[a]				-0.62	
				(0.34)	
AIVD					-0.25
					(0.19)
Age	0.02**	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.17	0.12	0.28	0.13	0.13
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Education	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.02	0.03
	(0.06)	(0.44)	(0.45)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Wald $\chi 2$	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07
Cox & Snell R^2	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58

[a] Denotes negative endorsement, i.e. opposition to the Wiv 2017 Act
Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1526
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

In this next series of regressions, the endorsement heuristic is included. Each of the influencers was first added individually. The endorsements by Amnesty International, Arjen Lubach and Bits of Freedom all reach significance, although at varying levels. The negative coefficients imply that, controlling for people's opinion on the referendum content (along with their age, sex and level of education), awareness of one of these anti-Wiv 'endorsements' correlates with a lower predicted probability of a Yes-vote in the Wiv referendum. Awareness of an endorsement leads to predicted odds of a Yes-vote that are 0.52 times lower in the case of Amnesty International, 0.59 times lower for Arjen Lubach, and 0.29 times lower for Bits of Freedom. The negative effect of these endorsements is in line with my expectations, as all three of these influencers voiced opposition to the new Wiv Act and endorsed a No-vote.

The negative endorsement from the Dutch Association of Journalists (NVJ) did not reach significance, nor did the only positive endorsement by the Dutch intelligence agency AIVD. As such, hypothesis 3 is mostly supported: awareness of an endorsement regarding the new Wiv can significantly influence vote choice in the referendum, but the effect varies per influencer. This outcome makes sense, as the exact amount of influence exerted by a public figure or organisation natural can depend on a wide variety of their personal characteristics.

The Want-variable remains highly significant in each of the regressions that includes an endorsement. In fact, the value of the coefficient remains almost unchanged. This implies that the importance of the content of the Wiv referendum is not diminished when the effect of endorsements is controlled for.

Table 7: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: heuristic 2	Voting choice
Intercept	-1.90***
	(0.45)
Want-variable	1.31***
	(0.10)
Heuristic 2: Endorsements	
Amnesty International[a]	-0.42
	(0.24)
Arjen Lubach[a]	-0.15
	(0.26)
Bits of Freedom[a]	-0.99**
	(0.34)
NVJ[a]	-0.18
	(0.37)
AIVD	0.10
	(0.22)
Age	0.02***
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.28
	(0.19)
Education	0.07
	(0.07)
Wald $\chi 2$	0.07
Cox & Snell R^2	0.58

[a] Denotes negative endorsement, i.e. opposition to the Wiv 2017 Act
Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1526
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

For the sake of completeness, I also estimated a model that includes all five endorsers simultaneously. While this does not lead to radically different results, it is notable that only the endorsement by digital rights group Bits of Freedom retains its significance when the other influencers are controlled for. The odds ratio of this endorsement is 0.37, compared to 0.29 when estimated separately. This shows that the size of its (negative) effect on the predicted odds of a Yes-vote is somewhat decreased. When controlled for the effect of the other influencers, endorsements by Amnesty International and Arjen Lubach no

longer significantly affect vote choice in the Wiv referendum. The Want-variable remains essentially unaffected when the endorsement heuristic is included in its entirety. Overall, these findings do not lead me to alter my conclusions regarding hypothesis 3.

Favouring the status quo

Table 8: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: heuristic 3	Voting choice
Intercept	-1.85***
	(0.52)
Want-variable	1.33***
	(0.08)
Heuristic 3: Status quo	0.03
	(0.21)
Age	0.02***
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.06
	(0.19)
Education	-0.00
	(0.07)
Wald $\chi2$	0.11
Cox & Snell R^2	0.58

Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1372
* *p* < 0.05; ** *p* < 0.01; *** *p* < 0.001; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

This regression adds the status quo heuristic. The theory states that voters are less likely to vote Yes in a referendum when they believe that there is not enough information available on the referendum subject. This is because they might favour the certainty of the status quo. However, in my estimation the coefficient for this heuristic fails to reach statistical significance. In fact, with a *p*-value of 0.88 significance is well out of reach. This leads me to conclude that no support is found for hypothesis 4. There is no indication that people who were unsure about the effects of the Wiv 2017 Act voted significantly differently from other voters, when controlling for opinion on the referendum content, age, sex and education level. Given these results, it might not come as a surprise that the Want-variable is found to be highly significant once again.

Economic conditions

Table 9: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: heuristic 4	Voting choice
Intercept	-1.90***
	(0.45)
Want-variable	1.31***
	(0.07)
Heuristic 4: Economic conditions	0.20
	(0.36)
Age	0.02***
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.10
	(0.18)
Education	-0.01
	(0.06)
Wald $\chi 2$	0.05
Cox & Snell R^2	0.58

Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1525
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

The fourth and final heuristic to be added, is economic conditions. Like the status quo heuristic, it fails to reach significance by a large margin, with a *p*-value of 0.57. The coefficient also does not point in the expected direction, but the very large *p*-value makes this irrelevant. Overall, these findings offer no support for hypothesis 5. Controlling for voters' views on the referendum content (along with the three control variables), there is no indication that people who faced economic uncertainty due to unemployment, were significantly more likely than other voters to cast a No-vote in the referendum.

The Want-variable continues its pattern of high significance when the economic conditions heuristic is controlled for, implying that this fourth heuristic is no more successful than the other three in diminishing the impact of referendum content on vote choice.

The four heuristics simultaneously

Table 10: Logistic regression estimates of voting choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Model: all heuristics	Voting choice
Intercept	-2.05***
	(0.61)
Want-variable	1.31***
	(0.09)
Heuristic 1: Party affiliation	0.56*
	(0.23)
Heuristic 2: Endorsements	
Amnesty International[a]	-0.37
	(0.27)
Arjen Lubach[a]	-0.09
	(0.29)
Bits of Freedom[a]	-1.04**
	(0.39)
NVJ[a]	-0.10
	(0.42)
AIVD	0.09
	(0.26)
Heuristic 3: Status quo	-0.04
	(0.25)
Heuristic 4: Economic conditions	-0.00
	(0.45)
Age	0.02*
	(0.01)
Sex (Male)	0.47*
	(0.23)
Education	0.06
	(0.08)
Wald $\chi2$	3.19
Cox & Snell R^2	0.60

[a] Denotes negative endorsement, i.e. opposition to the Wiv 2017 Act
Standard errors in parentheses
N = 1126
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; (two-tailed)
Source: CentERdata, 2018

In the final regression, all four categories of information shortcuts are included simultaneously. The standout finding here is that, once again, the Want-variable remains highly significant, even when all four heuristic categories are included. This indicates that a higher score on the Want-variable correlates with a higher predicted probability of a Yes-vote in the Wiv referendum, controlling for the influence of all four heuristic categories, along with the effects of age, sex and education level. These results clearly go against my expectation that referendum content would not be significant when all heuristics are factored into the equation. In other words, I do not find any support for hypothesis 6. The robustness of the Want-variable is surprising, as the value of its coefficient barely differs from its value in the estimation without heuristics: both are 1.31 when rounding to two decimal places. Due to the direct link between the coefficient and the odds ratio, it follows logically that the latter does not change much either: 3.72 here, compared to 3.71 initially. I take this to imply that the factual content of the Wiv 2017 referendum factored strongly into people's vote choice, and that this importance was not diminished by the four categories of heuristics that I examined.

When all heuristics are involved, results are broadly in line with their individual estimations. Party affiliation remains significant, although only at the p=0.05 level. Its odds ratio is 1.75, down from 1.86 when estimated without the other heuristics. The endorsement heuristic is also left standing, if only partially, as the coefficient for Bits of Freedom proves significant at p=0.01. This is the same result that I found for the model that only includes the five endorsers (table 6). When controlling for all other heuristics, peoples' opinion on the referendum content, and the control variables, only awareness of an endorsement by Bits of Freedom predicts a significantly lower probability of a Yes-vote in the Wiv referendum. The odds ratio is 0.35, compared to 0.29 when estimated individually. Finally, significance eludes the status quo and economic conditions heuristics. This is not unexpected, given that they were also not significant when estimated separately.

Conclusion

Through this study I have attempted to garner more insight into the topic of vote choice in national referendums in Europe. Specifically, this project has examined if and how two factors play a part in the decision-making process of voters. The first is the opinions held by voters regarding the factual referendum content. The second is a range of information shortcuts, or heuristics, that people can make use of to simplify choices that would otherwise require great cognitive effort. To study the importance of heuristics in practice, I chose as my case the 2018 Dutch referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, in which citizens were asked to vote for or against the Wiv 2017 Act. Post-referendum surveys conducted by CentERdata formed the basis for a series of logistic regression analyses, which I used to formulate an answer to the following research question:

Did Dutch voters cast their vote in the 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act based primarily on the subject matter of the referendum, or on decision-making shortcuts?

My first model estimation showed that vote choice was significantly affected by how the voter judged the content of the Wiv referendum. While this may initially seem a foregone conclusion, political science literature has given much attention over the years to the topic of voter ignorance (e.g. Popkin, 1994; Redlawsk & Lau, 2013). It has been over half a century since research began to reveal that people generally do not have the political knowledge required to cast well-informed votes (Campbell et al., 1960). These findings have often been reconfirmed since, including for European voters (Hobolt, 2007). However, my results show that there is significant congruence between views and vote choice in this particular referendum. This implies that people broadly understood what the Wiv 2017 Act is about, and based their votes on this knowledge.

My subsequent estimations step by step added four heuristic categories to the equation. Previous research established that all four are commonly used by voters (Bowler & Donovan, 2000; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). When controlling for peoples' personal preferences, I found that only two of them significantly influenced vote choice in the Wiv 2017 referendum. (1) The party affiliation & identification heuristic is used when people look to their preferred political party to determine how to vote. My analysis shows that

supporting a party that voted in favour of the new Wiv act, correlates with a higher probability of a Yes-vote in the referendum. (2) The endorsement heuristic refers to statements of support for or opposition to the subject of a referendum, made by prominent public figures or organizations. People who value these influencers' opinions can base their vote on them. I found that some, but not all, of the included endorsements had a significant effect: awareness of some 'negative endorsements' correlates with a higher probability of a No-vote in the referendum. However, *p*-values were strongly influenced by the inclusion of multiple endorsers in the same analysis. Only the endorsement by Bits of Freedom retained significance when all others were controlled for.

Meanwhile, the two remaining heuristics fell well short of significance. I found no evidence that voters in the Wiv referendum made use of the status quo heuristic, which suggests that people are more likely to vote against a proposal when they are uncertain about how it may affect them. I also found no support for the hypothesized use of the economic conditions heuristic, which holds that economic uncertainty increases the probability of a No-vote. It is possible that these results are partially attributable to my operationalization. For both heuristics the connection between theory and the survey questions I used to measure them was decent, but not optimal. This is a consequence of using a pre-existing survey. A more in-depth examination of these heuristics, possibly with tailor-made questions, could lead to different findings.

Returning to my main research question, my results lead me to conclude that subject matter was the primary factor to influence vote choice in the Dutch 2018 referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act. Voters' personal opinions regarding the factual content of the Wiv 2017 Act proved to be a strong predictor of which type of vote was cast, and this did not change when the influence of four popular types of information shortcuts was controlled for. Still, the influence of heuristics cannot be entirely discounted, as I found support for the relevance of party affiliation & association and, to a degree, endorsements. I take my findings to suggest that these heuristics helped people to decide which way to vote, but could not supersede their personal views. For example: people who see the new Wiv as a threat to their privacy, probably cast a No-vote, even when they knew that their preferred party voted in favour of the act.

I have argued that the Wiv 2017 referendum, being a 'least-likely' case, constitutes a critical test for the hypothesized dominant role of heuristics in direct democracy voting. If heuristics had surpassed factual

content in importance for this relatively understandable subject, it would have strongly supported the idea that the same holds for referendums overall. Conversely, my results do not preclude the possibility that heuristics do take primacy when more complicated topics are up for vote. The Dutch 2016 referendum on the Ukraine Association Agreement is an interesting case in this regard. An examination of heuristics use in this referendum might reveal noteworthy differences.

Comparing my findings to those of other studies needs to be done with a high degree of caution, as countless differences in operationalization make drawing conclusions from direct comparison both unwise and infeasible. Still, for the purpose of placing this work in a greater context, it is worth mentioning that my results on the party identification heuristic seems to fit a pattern. While partisan cues are generally absent in American initiative campaigns (Gerber & Lupia, 1995), party identification was found to be consistently associated with vote choice in U.S. ballot elections (Branton, 2003). Use of this heuristic was confirmed in a European context as well, specifically in the Norwegian referendum on EU membership (Hobolt, 2007). Findings on Switzerland also point to regular use of party affiliation as an information shortcut (Christin, Hug & Sciarini, 2002; Nai, 2010). It is quite possible that this heuristic matters for referendums overall, regardless of subject, location, or level of voter experience.

While political endorsers are among the most studied types of heuristics, endorsements by non-political sources have received far less attention. My findings show that the influence of these endorsements should not be discounted, and therefore I believe that this subject is worthy of increased scrutiny. For instance, little is currently known regarding which factors make an endorser relevant, and how this might be connected to the referendum topic.

Through this thesis I hope that I have contributed to our understanding of the role played by heuristics in vote choice. While the field of heuristics research has seen much progress in recent decades, many questions about this multifaceted subject remain at least partially unanswered. Critics of democracy, both in its direct and representative forms, have long argued that the people are too uninformed to make good political decisions. A thorough understanding of how voters make use of heuristics will go a long way in revealing whether these critics are correct.

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Appendix

Multicollinearity tests for logistic regression estimates of vote choice in the referendum on the Intelligence and Security Services Act, The Netherlands, 2018

Table 11: independent variables included: the Want-variable, age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.98	1.02
Age	0.92	1.09
Sex	0.98	1.02
Education	0.94	1.07

Source: CentERdata, 2018

Table 12: independent variables included: the Want-variable, the party affiliation & identification heuristic, age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.90	1.11
Party affiliation	0.86	1.16
Age	0.89	1.12
Sex	0.99	1.02
Education	0.94	1.06

Source: CentERdata, 2018

Table 12: independent variables included: the Want-variable, the endorsement heuristic (all five endorsements), age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.83	1.20
Endorsements		
Amnesty International	0.73	1.37
Arjen Lubach	0.74	1.35
Bits of Freedom	0.79	1.26
NVJ	0.85	1.18
AIVD	0.75	1.34
Age	0.90	1.11
Sex	0.93	1.07
Education	0.87	1.15

Table 13: independent variables included: the Want-variable, the status quo heuristic, age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.96	1.04
Status quo	0.97	1.03
Age	0.92	1.09
Sex	0.98	1.02
Education	0.93	1.08

Table 14: independent variables included: the Want-variable, the economic conditions heuristic, age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.98	1.02
Economic conditions	0.99	1.01
Age	0.91	1.10
Sex	0.98	1.02
Education	0.93	1.07

Table 15: independent variables included: the Want-variable, all four heuristics, age, sex and education

	Tolerance	VIF
Want-variable	0.77	1.31
Party affiliation	0.83	1.21
Endorsements		
Amnesty International	0.74	1.35
Arjen Lubach	0.73	1.37
Bits of Freedom	0.78	1.29
NVJ	0.86	1.17
AIVD	0.76	1.31
Status quo	0.92	1.09
Economic conditions	0.98	1.03
Age	0.87	1.15
Sex	0.94	1.06
Education	0.87	1.16