



# Electoral Compass



# Parties and Elections

- o Weaker party-voter links.
- o Established parties abandon traditional policy positions and ideological differences transform (disappear?).
- o Increasing number of new parties: fragmentation of the party landscape.
- o Overload of political information.
- o Result: electoral 'insecurity'.
- o Yet, issues more important to voters.
- o Voters begin to choose!

# Party Profiling: Positives

- o Elections and the internet: news forms of (interactive) political information.
- o Participation: millions of users.
- o Particularly young (female) users.
- o Easy access: better informed citizens/voters.
- o Connecting old and new media in innovative manner.
- o Significant impact on voters: turnout, conversion and attention-effect.

# Party Profiling: Negatives

- o Parties – aware of the impact – start to manipulate the tool(s).
- o Parties influence the selection of issues and the formulation of the questions.
- o Positioning (calibration) and justifications were not checked against policy pledges.
- o Objectivity and reliability questionable.
- o Voting advice too absolute: “you must vote for party X”.

# Electoral Compass

- o Dutch parliamentary elections 2006.
  - o [www.kieskompas.nl](http://www.kieskompas.nl)
- o Dutch regional elections 2006.
  - o [www.kieskompas.nl](http://www.kieskompas.nl)
- o Belgian parliamentary elections 2007.
  - o [www.kieskompas.be](http://www.kieskompas.be)
- o USA Presidential Elections
  - o [www.electoralcompass.com](http://www.electoralcompass.com)
- o European Parliament Elections 2009
  - o [www.EUProfiler.eu](http://www.EUProfiler.eu)
- o Forthcoming: Portugal: Compasso Eleitoral!

# Electoral Compass Basics

- o Political information in a comprehensible, interactive and easily accessible format;
- o Method scientifically grounded and totally transparent.
  - o Selection of issues
  - o Positioning of political parties (candidates)
- o Results are displayed in a two-dimensional graph.
- o Users can compare own (policy) preferences with all political parties and any combination of issues;
- o No simple voting advice: multiple options for further analysis by user.

# Non-partisan methodology

- o Selection of parties/candidates.
- o Selection of relevant issues.
- o Formulation of the questions.
- o Identification of main political dimensions of party competition.
- o Positioning of parties (calibration).
- o Justification of position.

# All possible positions on items broadly defined

The US should not have started the war in Iraq

completely agree    tend to agree    neutral    tend to disagree    completely disagree    no opinion

The US should never have started the war in Iraq. There are no justifications for this action, not energy security, terrorism or the possession of WMD.

The US should not have invaded Iraq. However, there are circumstances and justifications possible that allow for the US to attack its enemies abroad.

Whether the invasion was necessary or not is no longer important. Only the current situation in the conflict is relevant.

The US was right to start the war in Iraq. However, some of the justifications that were used for the invasion proved to be incorrect. Now the US needs to make the best of this mission.

The US had every right to start the war in Iraq. Saddam was a dictator and aided international terrorists. He was a threat to US national security and to the international order. The US has a task to intervene in countries that threaten US security.

# Positioning of parties

- Likert five point-item to extract both direction and intensity of (dis)agreement.
- Shows nuance and variation.

The US should not have started the war in Iraq

completely agree

tend to agree

neutral

tend to disagree

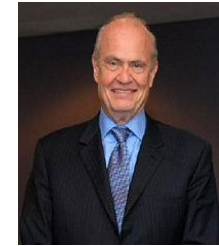
completely disagree

no opinion

# Each of the candidates is positioned on the issue

The US should not have started the war in Iraq

completely agree    tend to agree    neutral    tend to disagree    completely disagree    no opinion



Fred Thompson was featured in a commercial of Citizens United that advocated the invasion of Iraq in March 2003: "When people ask what has Saddam done to us, I ask, what had the 9/11 hijackers done to us -- before 9/11" (CNN.com)

Barack Obama opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. (Campaign website Barack Obama) "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences," Obama said [in 2002] (Associated Press, 02-10-2007)



Saddam worked to rebuild his chemical weapons stock, his missile delivery capability and his nuclear program. He has also given aid, comfort and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaeda members. Any vote that might lead to war should be hard, but I cast it with conviction. So it is with conviction that I support this resolution as being in the best interests of our nation. [...] Now, obviously, if I had known then what I know now about what the president would do with the authority that was given him, I would not have voted the way that I did.  
<http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/meethepress070923.pdf> 23-09-2007)



Iraq is only one front in the larger war on terror, and failure there would lead to a broader and bloodier regional conflict in the near future. Building an accountancy in Iraq will assist in reducing the threat of terrorism (Campaign website Rudy Giuliani 2008)



# Transparency

- o Tool is 100 % transparent.
- o Justification based on official documents.
- o All texts are accessible so that users can check.
- o Method includes a process of confirmation with parties.
- o Encourages parties to make position more explicit (in understandable language).
- o Avoids parties talking 'passed one another'.