Flowcharting the Research Question

Is there a *"pro-Russian"* Left-Right Alliance in the European Parliament?

Why are you asking this question if Political Science already provides some answers and there are so many more hints?

So far, studies on voting behaviour only consider Roll-Call-Votes and do not consider statements and speeches of MEPs wihtin such debates. We do not know anything about motives for certain voting patterns.

Fair enough.

It is probably a much more nuanced phenomenon than expected. "Pro-Russian" voting behaviour is determined by many different motives; not all of them have to be related to Russia.

Political Science agrees: Radical Left and Radical Right 'align' (→ cleavages, populism, euroscepticism); Russia as anti-hero in an Anti-Americanism worldview; also promoting traditional values and a strong nation state which is opposing international organisations. There is an increasing number of network events between Russia and radical (right) parties.

OMG!

MEPs from radical left and radical right parties were also present at the Crimean Status Referendum and some refused to condemn its Annexation by Russia.

Media, NGO reports and several researchers show that both radical left and radical right, inter alia, frequently vote *against* what might have negative impact for the Russian Federation.

Etc. etc.!

Apparently yes!

Why would both radical party families share a pro-Russian sentiment?

So there are financial incentives for certain voting behaviour. There might also be some sentiment in it?

There are several investigative studies about party sponsoring and financial connections between radical parties and the Kremlin.

Hmm... I am not 100% convinced.

Voting Behaviour...?

What does "pro-Russian" mean?

I don't know...?

Uhm... Never heard about that!?

Why?

In a computer-assisted Qualitative Content Analysis, I analyse speeches and statements of all MEPs in a sample of twenty EP-plenary debates (which discuss Russia-related issues).

Why do we think there is a pro-Russian left-right alliance in the European Parliament?

Oh, yes, I read about Putin-Apologists, Putin-Fans, Putinversteher, Russlandversteher, Putin's Fifth Column....

I will conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis. I assume that labels like "pro-Russian" are one of many delegimitation practices; they belong to a delegitimation repertoire.

I rarely find apologetic statements neither for Russia's foreign and military policies during Ukraine Crisis, nor for its deteriorating Human Rights situation.

What strikes the observer as "pro-Russian" statement frequently goes with criticism directed at EU policies, -structures,
-integration and its foreign policy towards Russia.

Since early 2014 there have been many public and political debates about "pro-Russian" attitudes and voting behaviour of radical right and left EU-parliamentarians.

Ever talked to an MEP about this?

I conducted in-depth interviews with MEPs and EP staff. A 2nd round of interviews is planned in order to verify new hypotheses.

What else?

MEPs from radical right and radical left parties frequently criticise different dimensions of the EU. Still, "genuinely" pro-Russian statements are scarce as most MEPs do not have a deliberate attitude towards Russia.
Apparently, self-concepts, identities and internalized roles determine speeches and voting behaviour of MEPs. Every politician considers him/herself as "pragmatic", whereas the opposite is "ideological" or "a populist". What motivates radical MEPs to vote in a certain way is their idea of being a 'corrective' to what the EP centre groups (want to) decide.

I am sure there is much more to tell!

Yes, a lot more! Work is in progress.
This Poster does of course not represent all aspects and hypotheses of my research project. I'll gladly tell you more about it.
Looking forward to your comments and ideas!
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