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Ulrike Guérot. (Európa Pont, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0)

Gleichschaltung macht frei*: Bonn University Fires Professor Ulrike Guérot over Allegations of 'Plagiarism'

An Amoral Tale of Double Standards (If Any), Rank Hypocrisy, and a Courageous Colleague Who Isn't Afraid of Speaking Truth to Power

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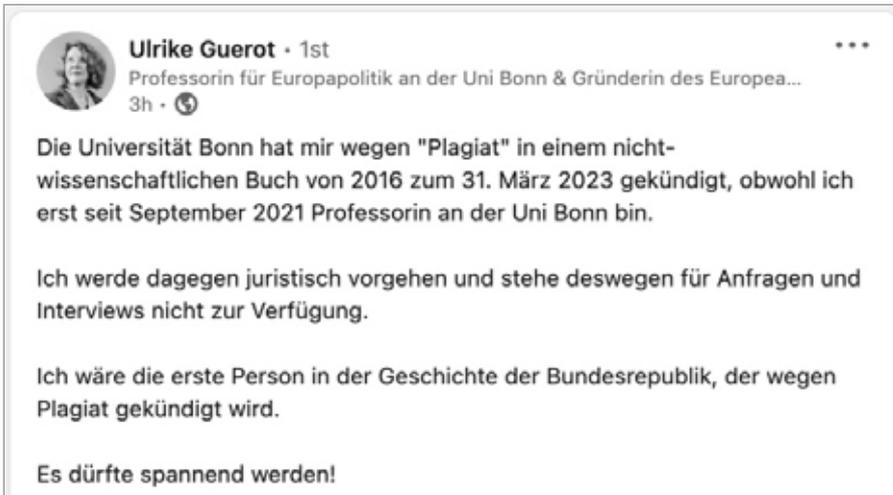


Editorial comment: This post was unplanned, as I had already posted a long entry earlier today. However, post it I shall, for this morning I learned that Ulrike Guérot (Professor of Political Science) was fired by the University of Bonn. Guérot is among the very few German academics who consistently spoke out against the Covid madness and argued for a more nuanced approach than the Kadavergehorsam (zombie-obedience) espoused by virtually all politicians and their willing collaborators in legacy media.

I have, therefore, decided to publish an essay in German on TKP [1] and provide you with an English translation. Please read and share Ulrike Guérot's story—it may be a harbinger of things to come.

Gleichschaltung macht frei: Bonn University Fires Professor Ulrike Guérot

History is repeating itself: this has happened before. The University of Bonn has terminated its 'contentious'—and upright—faculty member, Professor Ulrike Guérot, effective 31 March 2023. The reason given is 'plagiarism' in non-academic publications. Guérot became known to a broader public primarily through her principled stance against the Covid mandates and her 'contrarian' positions on the Ukraine conflict. This earned her a huge amount of harassment and ill-treatment in legacy and social media, but Guérot did not back



'The University of Bonn terminated my employment effective 31 March 2023, alleging 'plagiarism' in a non-academic publication, even though I only became a faculty member in Bonn in Sept. 2021. I declare my intent to sue and therefore cannot respond to any interview or other requests. I would be the first person to be fired in the history of the Federal Republic [since 1949] because of plagiarism. We live in interesting times!' [Translation by the author]

off. Last week, Jürgen Habermas was cancelled, this week it is Ulrike Guérot. Who will be next?

When I opened my LinkedIn profile this morning I was shocked:

'The University of Bonn terminated my employment effective 31 March 2023, alleging 'plagiarism' in a non-academic publication, even though I only became a faculty member in Bonn in Sept. 2021. I declare my intent to sue and therefore cannot respond to any interview or other requests. I would be the first person to be fired in the history of the Federal Republic [since 1949] because of plagiarism. We live in interesting times!' [Translation by the author]

The response on Twitter was even worse—a deluge of blatantly malicious commentary. [If you read German or use machine translations, please go to Ulrike Guérot's Twitter profile to gain an impression of the hate and harassment she has had to endure due to her stance. [2]

Of course, anyone who speaks out in public must be thick-skinned. What is particularly striking about the 'Guérot affair', however, is that the claims made by certain actors—even at a cursory first glance—have little to do with the truth.

The 'Guérot Affair': A Storm in a Teacup? Not at All!

Ulrike Guérot was appointed to the professorship for European policy at the 'Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität' in Bonn in 2021. Prior to this appointment, she held several positions, including positions at the Danube University Krems (2016-21), the universities of Frankfurt (both on the rivers Main and Oder), the Bucerius Law School in Hamburg, and the Paul N. Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C.

Anyone even slightly acquainted with academic practice knows, of course, that faculty appointments of this nature are always preceded by a very lengthy process.

Usually, these procedures begin years before the actual appointment with what is called a 'Strukturbericht' (structural reports, i.e. a justification for the vacancy based on past performance) and internal debates about the orientation and resources of the professorship. These discussions usually take place between the appointment committee, the department concerned, the faculty, and the university leadership. Only after all of these considerations have been the subject of comprehensive internal discussion, is the

vacancy announced to the 'public'—by which the 'public' within the university (universitätsöffentlich) is meant.

In other words, first and foremost, faculty appointments do not simply 'happen'. On the contrary, they are prepared long in advance and a great number of people are involved in these consultations, many of which are 'informal'. The saying that 'many cooks spoil the broth' may come to bear in the multiple influences shaping the discussions of so-called 'further considerations' that inevitably accompany every faculty appointment.

In short: Ulrike Guérot's 2021 appointment was certainly subject to a similar procedure and—this much seems certain—can by no means be described as 'unusual' or even 'extraordinary'.

On the contrary, the appointment committee that placed Guérot at the top of its ranked appointment list in 2020-2021 will have been very aware of the positions their new colleague publicly advocated.

Of course, no one can foresee just how newly appointed colleagues will behave in the future. Occasionally there are academics—who are all the more conspicuous if they have successfully mastered the obstacle course that commonly goes by the name of 'academic career'—who, once they have reached a supposedly 'safe' position, begin acting according to their sense of social responsibility.

'Historia docet': The Lessons of History

At this point, dear readers, two essays are of particular importance, both of which I warmly recommend. The first of these is, of course, Noam Chomsky's text on precisely this topic, which appeared under the title 'The Responsibility of Intellectuals' [3] on 23 Feb. 1967 in the New York Review of Books.

The second essay in question is by Harold Rosenbaum, 'A Herd of Independent Minds' [4], which appeared in the US magazine *Commentary* as early as autumn 1948 and in which Rosenbaum criticised the stifling intellectual conformity of post-war New York (If you cannot gain access to the text due to a paywall, please go to my substack [5]).

Why do I bring this up?

Because most of my ‘appointed’ colleagues prefer to follow the easy path, rather than the much harder path chosen by Chomsky and, more recently, by Guérot.

And why should you, dear reader, care about these academics and their problems?

This may come as a surprise to you, but one thing is clear:

Once the universities are all in ‘lockstep’ and no longer raise any objections to the arbitrary exercise of state power, your own rights and freedoms will be next in line to be curtailed or abolished. And there will be no one left in ‘academia’ to stand by you.

Notes on the Cultural Malaise within Academia

Many legacy media outlets have already reported on the (im-) moral culture within academia; Guérot herself has written about this on LinkedIn and Twitter. There have been articles in many regional papers as well as the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* [6], the *Weltwoche* [7], *Tichys Einblick* [8], and now *TKP* [9].

It is clear from these publicly accessible accounts that Guérot is not only being treated ‘unfairly’, but that a number of other aspects are being lumped together in a way that can only be called problematic, purposefully laying the groundwork for the character assassination of one of Germany’s most outspoken critics.

On the one hand, there is the accusation by the University of Bonn that the alleged reason for dismissal occurred ‘during her period of employment’. This relates to Guérot’s 2016 book *Why Europe Must Become a Republic* (orig. *Warum Europa eine Republik werden muss*), which was, rather obviously, published about six years before Guérot took up her post.

Naturally, Ulrike Guérot’s appointment was partly a result of her public profile, since in this day and age every professor must ideally have a comprehensive media profile in addition to being an expert in research and teaching. For women the-



Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität Bonn appointed Ulrike Guérot to the professorship of European Politics. (Foto: spaztacular, flickr, CC BY 2.0)

re are also additional (informal) considerations about their family life, and, in the case of men, the generally tacit assumption that, when necessary, the partner will be standing by ‘at the ready’ for ‘additional assignments’. To expect an appropriate critique of these aspects of the academic environment from the *juste milieu* seems, honestly speaking, like being part of a Beckett drama with a predictable outcome...

Back to the ‘Guérot affair’, because the actual situation is even more arcane: Guérot is alleged to have committed plagiarism in her essay *Why Europe Must Become a Republic*, which was published in 2016 under considerable time constraints. Either the appointment committee did not notice this or it was deliberately ‘overlooked’ for other reasons, e.g. due to the university’s considerably increased media visibility that came with the appointment of Guérot. (To gain an impression of Guérot’s visibility, just search for the title of her essay and her name—she became a ‘household name’ throughout the EU.)

Whatever other conclusions one may draw from this, it indicates that the appointment committee either did not look very closely at their prospective appointee or had, knowingly, accepted her social profile. This throws no good light on the committee. In no way, however, does it implicate Ulrike Guérot.

On the other hand, in their justification of the dismissal, the University of Bonn refers to a number of articles that appeared in legacy media outlets.

Any academic who publishes outside his or her own professional circles will be confronted, literally overnight, with a multitude of editorial or other objections, which, to put it mildly, have little or nothing to do with ‘good academic practice’.

Ulrike Guérot would be able to confirm this—as can I—without much ado: deadlines, the number of characters to a page, as well as other constraints (e.g. a lack of funding or time for additional copy-editing or proper translations) are all ‘part of the game’.

The *juste milieu* as a Repeat Offender

What, then, is the reason for Ulrike Guérot’s ‘fall from grace’? In his article for the *Weltwoche*, Stefan Millius has by far the most accurate explanation [10]:

‘The accusation of plagiarism is a flimsy pretext. What was described as plagiarism were minor faults due to carelessness, such as missing inverted commas. Nowhere did the professor systematically copy. She always listed her sources in the text.’

No, Guérot’s ‘mistake’ lay elsewhere. She was the darling of left-liberal circles for a long time—until she broke ranks with her stance during the Corona Crisis. She criticised the measures, demanded the prosecution of those responsible, and called for an end to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

When she then made a case for peace instead of arms deliveries to Ukraine and

Sources:

* Translator's note: These words evoke the infamous phrase 'Arbeit macht frei' (Work sets you free) that adorned the entrances to several Nazi concentration camps.

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Annalena Baerbock presents her book „Jetzt. Wie wir unser Land erneuern“ "Now. How we renew our country", in which she plagiarized diligently. (Foto: Twitter, Annalena Baerbock: <https://twitter.com/ABaerbockArchiv/status/1405534250284158978>)

openly spoke of the West's complicity in the war, mainstream media had finally had enough. She became an Anti-vaxxer, a Corona Denier [Corona-Leugner], and a Putin Propagandist [Putin-Versteher].

Because the highly esteemed, best-selling author could not be so easily "deleted" from the academic discourse, the alleged cases of plagiarism were suddenly conjured up. Anyone who looks more closely at the matter will simply be left shaking his or her head.

Last week, Jürgen Habermas was all but cancelled; this week, it is Ulrike Guérot's turn. And, by the way, just yesterday (!) NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praised Habermas' proposal in the highest terms, as reported by the Norwegian state broadcaster NRK on 23 Feb. 2023 [11]:

“This will probably end with negotiations. But any signal that we are not fully committed to Ukraine reduces the chances of a peaceful solution. It is only when Putin realises that he will not win on the battlefield that we can hope for a negotiated solution.

What is happening to Ulrike Guérot is terrifying in the extreme. And nobody mentions the most obvious parallel case, that of the warmonger Annalena Baerbock, who

is constantly taken to task by the same legacy media. (Sorry, that was a joke.)

As a particularly telling example of how the media discussed 'plagiarism' in the case of Annalena Baerbock, I cite the German state broadcaster ZDF (!) on 30 July 2021 [12]:

“Overall, it seems as if—so far—only very few, directly copied passages in the 240-page book actually infringe on copyright law. Nonetheless, the statement made by Baerbock and the Greens to the effect that there is no copyright infringement [13] is probably untenable.”

Lawyer Harro von Have said that 'as a rule, one would not litigate about this'. And legal scholar Volker Riebel added the following [14]:

“Since this is no longer simply a matter of copying fact-based formulations, but also formulations based on personal deliberation, using these formulations is closer to “actively misleading the reader”.”

These benevolent standards have not been applied in the case of the 'Guérot affair'. It should also be noted that Annalena Baerbock, due to her public office, carries a far greater social responsibility than Ulrike Guérot.

Nor is Baerbock—along with former Defence Minister Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg—the only person whose obviously questionable conduct in matters of this na-

ture has received much gentler treatment by mainstream media outlets.

For example, Matthias Döpfner comes to mind. As the head of the Axel Springer Group, he was also accused of plagiarism [15]; another ‘catch’ of the notorious ‘plagiarism hunter’ Stefan Weber [16].

By the way, Döpfner's offence was far more egregious than what Ulrike Guérot is accused of, as the Süddeutsche Zeitung reported a month ago [17]:

‘As the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main announced on Friday, the Commission for Scientific Misconduct concluded that “scientific misconduct took place in multiple cases of verbatim or intellectual adoption of someone else's intellectual authorship”. It went on to say, “However, the individual findings were not sufficient in their sum and with regard to their significance for the scientific core of the thesis to justify the removal of the doctoral degree’.

Döpfner was not only ‘allowed’ to keep his doctoral degree, there was no discussion at all as to whether he should resign from his functions.

One might also add that different (gender) standards are being applied.

A Shameful Conclusion

We are left with a decidedly stale after-taste. The most pertinent assessment of the situation can be found—not surprisingly—in the Swiss Weltwoche. To quote Millius again:

“German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock (Greens), when writing her book *Jetzt: Wie wir unser Land erneuern* (“Now: How to Renew Our Country”), amply made use of the thoughts and words of other authors. Legacy media immediately came to her defence: since it was not a scientific oeuvre, references were not required’.

The same should apply to Ulrike Guérot’s book *Wer schweigt, stimmt zu* (‘Silence Means Consent’). It is a popular science essay, not a doctoral thesis (unlike Döpfner's, I might add). However, while the politician was cleared, the professor lost her job.

Guérot is not going to take this lying down. However, even if she succeeds in court, the reality is that, in academic circles, access to research opportunities is only granted if one remains within the parameters set by the state.

This is unacceptable, particularly as a very similar case occurred a few months ago involving Professor Günter Roth (an article was published in German at TKP [18]).

Personally, I wish Ulrike Guérot all the best and courage to face what lies ahead.

We should all follow the cause of the Vienna Secession:

To every age its scholarship, to every scholarship its freedom.

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