

Example of the us and german student movement essay

[Countries](#), [Vietnam](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The United States and the German Student Movement

The German Student Revolt of 1968 in West Germany happened due to various domestic and international political and social forces. The merger of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the majority Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in 1966 left the German political system with virtually no opposition during that time, raising insinuations that an authoritarian regime is well underway (Hockenos 53). The emergence of radical left-wing movements in the United States (US) inspired dissenters in West Germany, particularly college students who lamented the degrading university system due to the economic decline during their time. German students eventually involved themselves in issues involving the US such as the Vietnam War, which they vehemently rejected (Rury 582; Schwabe 179-180).

The US became both a benchmark and an object of vilification of German student protesters (Schwabe 180). The democratic ideals the US upholds proved pivotal for the progress of the student movement in West Germany, while the ongoing Vietnam War and the imperialist innuendos that particular event generated enabled those students to draw comparisons with the SPD-CDU merger crisis. The German student protesters moved to express their dissent through proper avenues of expression amidst the conservative nature of universities in West Germany. Yet, university administrators promptly responded by restricting all protests within university grounds. Persistence came about instead of repression, with the German students citing the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in the US as a testament to their rights to express and the citation of absence of political movements in

universities being the cause of Nazi (National Socialism) progression during the pre-World War II era (Hockenos 56).

Whereas the German student movement took inspirational cues from similar movements in the US, it harbors extraordinary differences notable for closer analysis. The first difference is that the German students meant to provoke US interventionism as a way of exposing their imperialist demeanor. Their allegations against the US due to their apparently imperialist measures during the Vietnam War roused the attention of those students who were dissenting against the SPD-CDU merger they viewed as authoritarian.

Whereas the US did not respond directly to those controversies, they nevertheless connived with the government of West Germany and reminded them of their duty to maintain public order. It is in that aspect in which the US had a hand against the German student protesters (Schwabe 180).

The second distinct characteristic of the German student movement is its vindictive nature. West Germany, with its neighbor East Germany, suffered grave damages caused by the domination of Nazi forces led by the infamous Adolf Hitler. The terror the German had to suffer during Hitler's regime and World War II has resulted to the international presentation of their nation as a vile figure alongside material damages such as destruction brought by war, economic downfall and the deaths of millions of people due to warfare and the torturing schemes of the Nazi forces. With that, the West German students were wary that the same might happen against should an authoritarian regime emerge out of the SPD-CDU merger. Manifestations of dictatorial rule, such as repression of free expression in universities have troubled them further. Such was notwithstanding the fact that the

conservative government of West Germany and university administrations did so to appease the US, who were watching over them in light of their notorious involvement in World War II the treaty binding them not to engage in military action that could affect the international community as they did during the war. The recession happening during the 1960s, alongside the declining quality of university education, added up to the concerns of the dissenting students as they received the Vietnam War with so much spite and antagonism. Calling Vietnam as the next Auschwitz, the place where many of the Nazi-operated concentration camps were located, German student protesters feared that the US might cause another large-scale international havoc measured with imperialist and authoritarian underpinnings. Thus, they saw the US as both a figure of inspiration and malice, in which case they were able to progress in large numbers (Hockenos 54-62; Rury 582).

A closer perusal of the facts surrounding the events in 1968 would reveal that there are significant connections between the multifaceted ideas of the German student protesters. Their main root of dissent sprouted from the trauma brought by the Nazi regime and World War II, and thus they mobilized with the common message advocating the eradication of authoritarianism and imperialism. The German student protesters proved their progressiveness through their concern over international affairs involving the US – one of the two states forming the bipolar nature of international relations that time, the other one being the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). With the Vietnam War in place, the German student protesters took part in antagonizing it, seeing it as a reflection of the

very ideals they reject and despise. However, the subject of Vietnam War being a manifestation of US imperialism and authoritarianism is still a matter of much debate, so it is hard to qualify any arguments favoring or rejecting the views of German student protesters that time on the US. Yet, as a matter of balance, those students viewed the US not just in a unilateral scale. They did not hate the US as a whole just because of the imperialist innuendos of its government. Rather, they actually looked up to it as a nation that developed genuine democratic models and movements that eventually inspired their own. Such provides for their truly progressive nature, having become apparent in the events during 1968.

Works Cited

Hockenos, Paul. *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany*. Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.

Rury, John. "Children of Privilege: Student Revolt in the Sixties by Cyril Levitt (Review)." *The Journal of Higher Education* 56. 5 (1985): 582-584. Print.

Schwabe, Klaus. "The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties, by Martin Klimke (Review)." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9. 2 (2011): 179-180. Print.