
**To what extent was the creation of the Manhattan
Project a product of Germany's desire to expand
between 1932 and 1942?**

Tarik Onalan

#####-####

SCHOOL

Word Count: 1706

June 2015

I Plan of Investigation

The task of this investigation is to analyze to what extent the creation of the Manhattan project was a product of Germany's desire to expand between 1932 and 1942.

The primary method of this investigation is to analyze accounts of the objectives of the Manhattan Project in the years before its inception to understand possible reasons behind its founding. This investigation will also analyze accounts of the interaction of the German and American propaganda machines to understand the influence Germany had on the global populace. Additionally, accounts of German expansion by Americans will be analyzed to understand to what extent the German expansion was viewed as a direct threat to America.

This investigation will focus on three points: fear of Germans by the Americans, competition to produce atomic weapons, and propaganda campaigns. The scope of this investigation will be limited to sources pertaining to these points.

II Summary of Evidence

- Fear of Germans and the Manhattan Project:
 - American leadership perceived Germany as the only enemy with the capacity to take advantage of information taken from the Americans (Groves 141).
 - Security from Germany was one of the founding objectives of the

Manhattan Project (Groves 140).

- Leo Szilard—a physicist and refugee—brings information about German atomic weapons development and asks Roosevelt to pursue development, which led President Roosevelt to begin atomic weapons research (Norris 12).
 - America feared that Germany would produce an atomic weapon (Stoff, Fanton, and Williams 136).
- Competition to produce weapons:
 - German scientists went to Germany to contribute to atomic development against America (Powers 6).
 - The US began atomic weapons development out of fear that the Germans would produce a similar weapon (Steinberg 88).
 - The US began atomic weapons development to deter Germany's nuclear first-strike capability (Steinberg 89).
 - Rockets could replace and outclass long-range guns, and constituted a loophole in the Versailles treaty (Neufeld 2).
 - Rockets could be used to attack America with various payloads, thus making them appealing to Germans and fear-inducing to Americans (Neufeld 157).
 - Propaganda:
 - American:

- * The American government controlled media outlets to spread propaganda against Nazi Germany (Laurie 2).
 - * The Manhattan Project was indirectly used as deterrent against German expansion (Groves 140).
- Nazi:
- * Nazi Germany had “a distorted vision of national grandeur” (Kallis 37).
 - * Expansion into Europe made Americans fearful because of the image portrayed by the “distorted vision” (Kallis 37).
 - * Increasing German global influence (e.g. Argentina, Austria) (Pyenson 2).
 - * Increasing German focus on cultural and territorial spread pre-WWII (Pyenson 17).
 - * The Germans were looking to create a Nordic Europe (Guettel 192).
 - * The Germans, among other regions, had extensive propaganda distribution in Latin America, which it planned to use as leverage against the United States (Kris 59).
 - * The German government employed self-victimization to get popular support for expansion into areas populated by Germans (Bergen 1).

III Evaluation of Sources

The author of the article *Dividing the Indivisible: The Fissured Story of the Manhattan Project*, Margot Norris, is a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Irvine. The purpose of this article is to separate the facts of the Manhattan Project from the myths, with Norris' thesis being that the actual ambitions of the Manhattan Project were hidden from the public as political policy, with stated ambitions feeding misinformation to the public as part of propaganda. A value of the origin is that as a professor of English, the author brings a new perspective to the topic that is based on wide access to literary works instead of political documents. A limitation of the origin is that the author's field is not focused on history, causing the author to have limited resources for research, which may not be comprehensive. The value of the purpose is that it incorporates the political perception of the Manhattan Project, which is highly relevant in understanding the role of fear of German expansion. The limitation of the purpose is that it is more focused on the role of the US in the Manhattan Project, with a lack of sources from foreign countries, and thus a lack of a foreign perspective.

The author of the book *Cultural imperialism and exact sciences: German expansion overseas, 1900-1930*, Lewis Pyenson, is a professor of the History of Science with a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of many books about mathematics and physics in Germany. The purpose of this book is to evaluate the increasing influence of Germany towards the beginning of World War 2, with the thesis being that Germany's scientific

prowess led to its increasing influence around the world. The value of the origin is that as a professor of history, Pyenson has access to large amounts of resources concerning the topics he has written about in his book. The limitation of the origin is that the author may not consider political and social issues in his analysis, as Pyenson is a professor of the history of science, meaning that the politics behind an event are not as central to his research as the science behind an event. The value of the purpose is that it provides a direct insight into the relation between German expansion and scientific development. The limitation of the purpose is that it does not focus on the involvement of politics to the extent that it does the sciences.

IV Analysis

German expansion's correlation on the Manhattan Project can be described through three different categories: fear of Germans by the Americans, competition to produce weapons, and propaganda. Fear of Germans represents the American perception of the Germans, weapons development competition represents the American reaction to German expansion, and propaganda on the part of the Germans is direct evidence of their desire to expand; American counter- propaganda, on the other hand, falls between the categories of perception and reaction. The creation Manhattan Project is analogous to the sum of these individual parts: perception caused a reaction, which, in turn, caused the creation of the Manhattan Project.

The Manhattan Project was founded in some part out of fear of the Germans. The American government feared the production capabilities of

Germany, perceiving them as the only enemy with the capacity to take advantage of information taken from the Americans (Groves 6). This belief alone provides insight on the perspective Americans had of Germans: the German state as a technologically advanced country capable of scientific and industrial development on a scale comparable to the United States. The big fear was that this development capacity would go towards producing an atomic weapon that could be used against the United States (Stoff, Fanton, and Williams 136). Leo Szilard—a physicist and refugee from Germany—brought information on German atomic weapons development to Roosevelt, asking him to consider development of atomic weapons technologies (Norris 12). Roosevelt, soon after that, created the Manhattan Project (12). The original objective of the Manhattan Project was, in fact, to have security from Germany (Groves 140). With this information in mind, it becomes easier to see that fear of Germans was partially a motivating factor for founding the Manhattan Project.

The competition between the Americans and the Germans to produce weapons was also a motivating factor for creating the Manhattan Project. When German scientists went to Germany to contribute to atomic weapons development, the United States felt pressured to produce a competing atomic weapons program to prevent Germany from acquiring an atomic weapon first (Powers 6; Steinberg 88). Given that one of the founding objectives of the Manhattan Project was security from the Germans, this fact becomes more pronounced, as the pressure to produce an atomic weapon is amplified both by the fact that the German atomic weapons program was rather advanced and the fact that Germany was prepared to use an atomic weapon when it

had produced one. This pressure was increased after extensive German rocket development. Rockets constituted a loophole in the Versailles treaty, allowing Germany to potentially build up an arsenal of weaponry that could operate at ranges far enough to attack America (Neufeld 2; Neufeld 157). Rockets could be used to deliver nuclear warhead payloads, which made them particularly appealing to the Germans (Neufeld 157). The United States, in trying to deter a nuclear first-strike by Germany, created the Manhattan Project as a competing nuclear weapons program to Germany's nuclear weapons program (Steinberg 89). What the rocket technology accomplished was suddenly make America a reachable target with any kind of payload; America's response to this development was to make the Manhattan Project to outpace the German atomic weapons program so a German nuclear payload would never reach America.

The aggressiveness of the German propaganda campaign helps expose other motivations for creating the Manhattan Project. Propaganda campaigns on both sides, American and German, shed some light into both the fear and weapon-competition issues; the Germans were, with their expansion, looking to create a Nordic Europe, using their control of the press to gain popular support (Guettel 142; Bergen 1). What made this desire to expand disturbing to the Americans was the perception that the Germans had a distorted national vision (Kallis 37). The Germans already had influence—through extensive propaganda—in the Latin American region, planning to use their cultural and political influence in the region as leverage against the Americans (Pyenson 2,17). The fact that Germany had a foothold so close to the American homeland brings the issue into the realm of fear; given that the

Germans were so aggressive with their expansion, the fact that they were “on the doorstep”, so to speak, of the Americans was disturbing, causing no end of counter- propaganda by the American government (Laurie 2). Ultimately, the propaganda reveals the simple fact that a good portion of the Manhattan Project was simply for deterrent purposes against Germany, allowing for increased safety from German aggression (Groves 140).

V Conclusion

Fear of Germans, competition to produce weapons, and propaganda against Germans all tie back to the fact that the Germans were more aggressive in their expansion in the decade before the creation of the Manhattan Project. While it is believed that the Pacific War was a primary cause for the creation of the Manhattan Project, it is clear that Germany’s desire to expand also contributed greatly to the founding of the Manhattan Project. Ultimately, the Manhattan Project’s creation was influenced by Germany’s desire to expand by a great extent between the years of 1932 and 1942.

Works Cited

Bergen, Doris L. “Instrumentalization of ”Volksdeutschen” in German Propaganda in 1939: Replacing/Erasing Poles, Jews, and Other Victims”. *German Studies Review* 31.3. ISSN: 01497952 (2008): 447–470. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27668587>>.

- Groves, Leslie R. *Now It Can Be Told; the Story of the Manhattan Project*. 1st ed. New York, New York: Harper, 1962. Print.
- Guettel, Jens-Uwe. *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776-1945*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Print.
- Kallis, Aristotle A. *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Taylor and Francis, 2002. Print.
- Kris, Ernst. "GERMAN PROPAGANDA INSTRUCTIONS OF 1933". *Social Research* 9.1. ISSN: 0037783X (1942): 46–81. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40981833>>.
- Laurie, Clayton D. *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade against Nazi Germany*. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1996. Print. Modern War Studies.
- Neufeld, Michael J. *The Rocket and the Reich: Peenemünde and the Coming of the Ballistic Missile Era*. New York, New York: Free Press, 1995. Print.
- Norris, Margot. "Dividing the Indivisible: The Fissured Story of the Manhattan Project". *Cultural Critique* 35. ISSN: 08824371 (1996): 5–38. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354570>>.
- Powers, Thomas. *Heisenberg's War: The Secret History of the German Bomb*. 1st ed. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. Print.
- Pyenson, Lewis. *Cultural Imperialism and Exact Sciences: German Expansion Overseas, 1900-1930*. Vol. 1. New York, New York: Peter Lang, 1985. Print. Studies in History and Culture.

Steinberg, Gerald M. "Comparing Technological Risks in Large Scale National Projects". *Policy Sciences* 18.1. ISSN: 00322687 (1985): 79–93. Web. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4532038>>.

Stoff, Michael B., Johnathan F. Fanton, and R. Hal Williams. *The Manhattan Project: A Documentary Introduction to the Atomic Age*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1991. Print.