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Legacies of the Manhattan Project¹

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The Manhattan Project of World War II mobilized thousands of people, including many of the nation's leading physicists, and extensive material resources to design, develop, and manufacture the world's first nuclear weapons. It also established sprawling new facilities for the production of fissionable fuels – notably at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Hanford, Washington. It left a set of powerful legacies in the context of the Cold War – endowing scientists with conscience-taxing responsibilities in the nuclear arms race; promoting enormous patronage of academic research by defense and defense-related federal agencies, notably the Office of Naval Research and the Atomic Energy Commission; and turning its wartime facilities into major national laboratories that advanced the fields of high-energy and nuclear physics and stimulated local industrial economies but that in some cases, notably at Hanford, severely polluted the surrounding environment with radioactive waste and disrupted the livelihoods of native peoples.

¹Legacies of the Manhattan Project