

The Science Behind the Drama of ‘Oppenheimer’

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Iran’s potential push for a nuclear device and the region’s broader proliferation challenges cast a shadow over the new summer blockbuster.

The new movie about physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project is raking in millions of dollars as it packs theaters this summer. *Oppenheimer* takes the usual Hollywood liberties with facts, but essentially the science is correct, even if it’s thinly explained. How does this tie into today’s Middle East, where concern about Iran’s nuclear program might be on the minds of movie audiences? Iran’s route to plutonium, via a heavy water reactor and a reprocessing plant, is cut off (we hope). Yet Iran’s designs for a highly-enriched uranium weapon—it received three designs from Pakistan—are much more sophisticated than a Nagasaki-type bomb. A Pakistani-type device could fit under the wing of an F-16 fighter-bomber or on top of a missile. The deceased Pakistani nuclear scientist, A. Q. Khan, once described it in a letter to me...

[Read the full article on the Messenger website. \(https://themessenger.com/opinion/beyond-the-drama-of-oppenheimer-heres-the-science\)](https://themessenger.com/opinion/beyond-the-drama-of-oppenheimer-heres-the-science) ❖

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