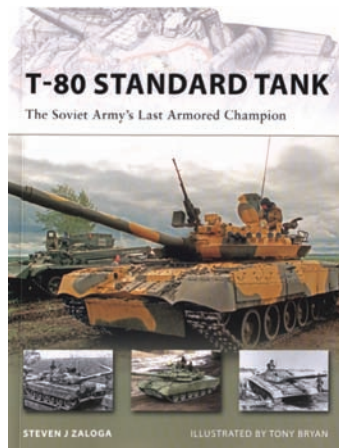


T-80 STANDARD TANK: THE SOVIET ARMY'S LAST ARMORED CHAMPION
ZALOGA, Steven J.. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2009, paperback, 48 pages, \$19.95,
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The nemesis of Canadian and NATO armour for over a decade, the T-80 Main Battle Tank (MBT) posed a most serious threat to 4 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (4 CMBG) during its latter days of defending West Germany. Still, as Steven J. Zaloga reveals in his recent book, *T-80 Standard Tank: The Soviet Army's Last Armored Champion*, the steel beast was not always what it appeared to be.

Number 152 in the Osprey Vanguard series, this book is squarely focused on the technical design and developmental history of the T-80 tank and follows its conceptual evolution from its predecessor, the T-64. One is quickly introduced to the overwhelming complexity and political competitiveness of the Soviet tank design bureau system, and it leaves one to wonder at times if they realized they were actually degrading their overall defence capabilities by working against each other so often. The end result is, however, a capable enough MBT, but one that took far too long to develop, and in the end, needed many adjustments to stave off the threats posed by its three main adversaries—Abrams, Challenger, and Leopard.

Having read and reviewed many of the previous Osprey books I was initially excited about the arrival of this volume, but after consuming it I came away feeling unsatisfied. Appreciating that these books are generally limited in space and follow a standard layout and content recipe, this book spends too much time simply identifying and listing every project (*ob'ekt*) in chronological order and too little time putting these developments into the larger context of Soviet concepts about direct fire support capability. For example, the book oddly explains in details which main armaments were chosen, but not why or what their effective ranges were. In armoured warfare, the ability to reach farther and hit first is important, yet Zaloga does not address such issues here except when briefly discussing the T-80s *Kobra* missile round. However, the book does give good detail on other aspects of the MBT, such as its engine plant and explosive reactive armour development. Here, the author provides sufficient context for the reader to appreciate why certain design decisions were being made.

Given that the T-80 has seen extensive combat operations, one would expect a book such as this to discuss whether the design actually succeeded in battle. Yet again, the book falls short on this account, and other than the briefest description of the Russian armour debacle at Grozny on 31 December 1994, the reader will have to look for details on the T-80's combat effectiveness elsewhere.

Despite its shortcomings, this book fits the usual Osprey Vanguard series design and offers plentiful colour photographs, technical cutaways, and very good vehicle illustration plates. For those already collecting the series, *T-80 Standard Tank: The Soviet Army's Last Armored Champion*, will make an adequate addition.