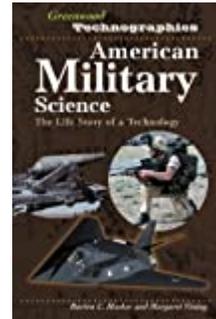**Barton C. Hacker.** *American Military Technology: The Life Story of a Technology.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006. xxiii + 205 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-313-33308-8.

Reviewed by Blair Haworth (U.S. Army Center of Military History)

An Introductory Work

Barton Hacker is curator of Military History at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and Margaret Vining is Curatorial Specialist there. In *American Military Technology*, they set out to explicate the interaction between U.S. military, engineering, and scientific institutions from colonial times up to 2000. The work is a part of the Greenwood Technographies series, intended to provide brief overviews of the history of selected technologies (firearms, railroads, the book, etc.) in social context. *American Military Technology*, with its specific national focus, appears to be unusual in the series.

American Military Technology generally follows a straightforward chronological timeline (indeed, the book includes an actual timeline in its front matter), with the exception of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where military and naval developments are covered in parallel chapters. The chapters for each era, in turn, are organized thematically. The chapter on World War I, for instance, contains subdivisions dealing with motorization (including aviation), war at sea, medicine, aspects of total war, and the mobilization of American science, among others. Notably, chemical warfare is soft-pedaled as a dead-end that "meant no more than the briefest flurry of postwar interest"–a debatable assertion (p. 65). The basic text is embellished with illustrated biographical sidebars–a term that must be used with caution, as they take up the entire width of the page and are often more than a page long. While the pieces themselves are informative, this arrangement hinders the readability of the book.

American Military Technology is by no means a work for the specialist. It does, however, provide a useful overview of the subject, and theselect bibliography suggests further readings over a wide range of accessibility.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

https://networks.h-net.org/h-war

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