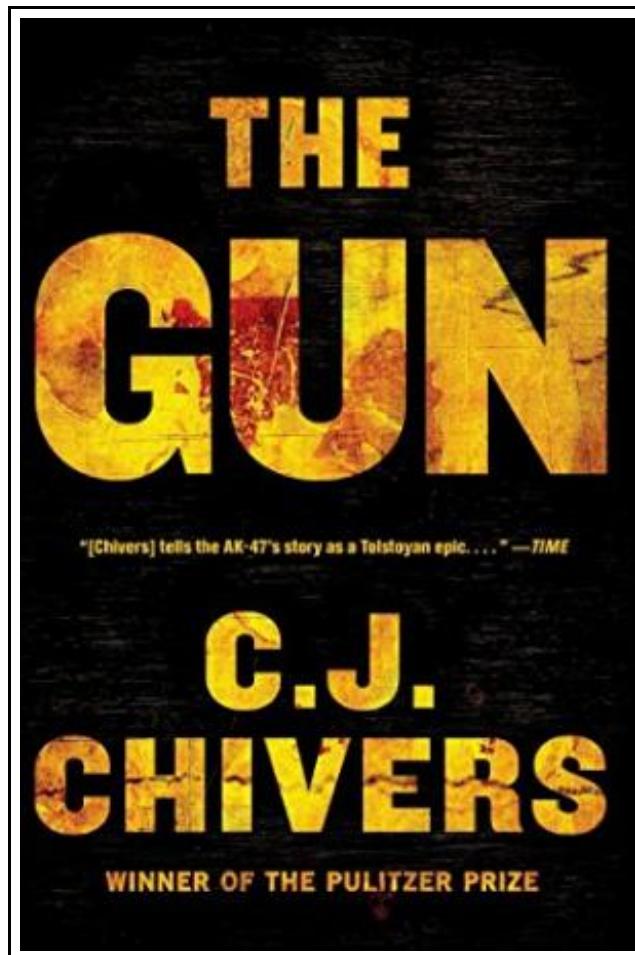


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SIMON SCHUSTER, United States, 2011. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Reprint. 212 x 140 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. In a tour de force, prize-winning New York Times reporter C.J. Chivers traces the invention of the assault rifle, following the miniaturization of rapid-fire arms from the American Civil War, through WWI, Vietnam, to present day Afghanistan when Kalashnikovs and their knock-offs number as many as 100 million, one for every seventy persons on earth. At a secret arms-design contest in Stalin's Soviet Union, army technicians submitted a stubby rifle with a curved magazine. Dubbed the AK-47, it was selected as the Eastern Bloc's standard arm. Scoffed at in the Pentagon as crude and unimpressive, it was in fact a breakthrough a compact automatic that could be mastered by almost anyone, last decades in the field, and would rarely jam. Manufactured by tens of millions in planned economies, it became first an instrument of repression and then the most lethal weapon of the Cold War. Soon it was in the hands of terrorists. In a searing examination of modern conflict and official folly, C. J. Chivers mixes meticulous historical research, investigative reporting, and battlefield reportage to illuminate the origins of the world's most abundant firearm and the consequences of its spread. The result, a tour de force of history and storytelling, sweeps through the miniaturization and distribution of automatic firepower, and puts an iconic object in fuller context than ever before. The Gun dismantles myths as it moves from the naive optimism of the Industrial Revolution through the treacherous milieu of the Soviet Union to the inside records of the Taliban. Chivers tells of the 19th-century inventor in Indianapolis who designs a Civil War killing machine, insisting that more-efficient slaughter will save lives. A German attache who...

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