Your notes

GCSE History: revision notes

Conflict and tension in Asia, 1950–1975

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The Korean War, 1950–53

- Korea was divided at the **38th parallel** in 1945: a communist North under Kim Il-sung and a South under Syngman Rhee. In June 1950, North Korea invaded the South.
- A UN force led by the USA and General MacArthur landed at Inchon (September 1950) and pushed north. China entered the war (late 1950), and the front settled near the **38th parallel**. Truman sacked MacArthur in 1951, and an armistice was signed in July 1953.

Vietnam: from the French to the Americans, 1954–64

- The Vietnamese defeated France at Dien Bien Phu (1954). The Geneva Accords split Vietnam at the 17th parallel: Ho Chi Minh's communist North and Diem's South.
- The USA supported the South, fearing the **domino theory**. The **Viet Cong** fought in the South, supplied along the **Ho Chi Minh Trail**. After the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964), Congress let President Johnson fight.

The American war, 1965–75

- Operation Rolling Thunder (1965) bombed the North, and US troops arrived. The **Viet Cong** used guerrilla warfare; the USA used napalm, Agent Orange and search-and-destroy missions.
- The **Tet Offensive** (1968) and the My Lai massacre (1968) turned American opinion against the war. Nixon's **Vietnamisation** withdrew US troops; protests included Kent State (1970).
- The Paris Peace Accords (1973) ended US involvement, and Saigon fell to the North in April 1975.

Key terms

38th parallel	The line dividing North and South Korea.
Domino theory	The fear that if one country fell to communism, its neighbours would follow.
Viet Cong	Communist guerrillas in South Vietnam.
Ho Chi Minh Trail	The supply route from North Vietnam to the South.
Tet Offensive	The 1968 Viet Cong attack on cities in the South.
Vietnamisation	Nixon's policy of handing the fighting to South Vietnam.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Who invaded South Korea in June 1950?
2. Where did MacArthur land in September 1950?
3. Why did Truman sack MacArthur in 1951?
4. When did the Korean War armistice come?
5. Where were the French defeated in 1954?
6. What was the domino theory?
7. What did the Gulf of Tonkin incident (1964) lead to?
8. Why was the Tet Offensive (1968) important?

Answers

1. North Korea
2. Inchon
3. MacArthur wanted to widen the war against China
4. July 1953
5. Dien Bien Phu
6. The fear that communism would spread from country to country
7. Congress allowing Johnson to fight in Vietnam
8. It turned American opinion against the war

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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