**How far was Mao’s ideology the main reason for Mao’s Great Leap Forward?**

**Relevant pages in textbook – p207-8**

**Overview for introduction:**

Encouraged by the successes of the first five year plan, Mao launched his second five year plan, the so called Great Leap Forwards in 1958. This was a highly ambitious attempt to stimulate agricultural production and industrial production simultaneously. The Great Leap Forwards was Mao’s attempt to attempt to harness the energies of the masses and transform China into an industrial superpower almost over-night.

**Suggested line of argument:**

Although ideology played a part in Mao’s decision to launch the GLF, political considerations were the most important. Economic and personal factors also played a part in the decision.

**Possible Paragraphs:**

**Ideology:**

Ideologically, the GLF’s reliance on mass peasant mobilisation fitted in with Mao’s thinking, and the greater degree of decentralisation, compared to the first plan, gave more scope for local initiative to thrive, which also satisfied Mao’s ideological preferences.

**Economic:**

Economic considerations were an important reason why Mao launched the GLF. Industrialisation depended on agriculture becoming more productive and efficient in order to feed the industrial workforce. This would free up peasants, who would migrate to the cities to become urban workers themselves. The speed with which farming had been collectivised and the encouraging early signs from the new People’s Communes seemed to indicate that agriculture was progressing sufficiently rapidly by 1958 to encourage Mao to accelerate the demands on industry.

**Possible however point:**

However it would be wrong to see the launch of the GLF as purely a rational economic decision as divisions in the party between conservatives and radicals over what economic approach to follow meant that political considerations were more important.

**Political:**

Political motives were the main reason why Mao decided to launch the GLF.

Having just returned from Moscow Mao was determined to demonstrate that he could act independently of the Soviet Union. (By 1957, Mao felt that the PRC was strong enough to begin ending its earlier economic dependence on the USSR.) By moving from socialism to communism along the ‘Chinese road’, rather than following the Russian model, Mao hoped to demonstrate his credentials as the next leader of the Communist world. Mao hoped that that the GLF with its commitment to developing industry and agriculture simultaneously, while also mobilising the peasants en masse, would do just that.

**Personal:**

The decision to launch the GLF was also the result of personal factors.

Buoyed by the success of the first five year plan, Mao’s confidence was at a high. Collectivisation had been achieved more rapidly than expected and industrial growth rates during the first five year plan were impressive. Furthermore the ease with which collectivisation had been achieved increased Mao’s prestige further at the expense of his opponents in the party like Zhou Enlai who had expressed doubts about the collectivisation programme.

Mao intended to use the GLF to boost his personal prestige even further by closely binding him to future economic success.