It was clear from the Chinese defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5 that the Self Strengthening movement had failed. This was a massive defeat for China by the ‘Dwarf Barbarians’ – first defeat to an non-European nation.

Japan achieved most favoured nation status along with the European powers.

The defeat led to the ‘scramble for concessions’ between 1895-1898 when most of the major powers tried to take full advantage of China’s political, military and economic weaknesses.

France increased its influence in Southern China, after the Triple Intervention Russia took control of Liadong Peninsular, Germany took a foothold in Shangdong Province, Britain took over Upper Burma (a Chinese Tributary State) and competed with France over control of Yunnan Province in the South

40-50 new edicts introduced in a 100 day period in 1898

Causes

1. Emperor GuangXu wanted to emulate the Meiji Reforms and success of Japan.
2. The failure of Self Strengthening was exemplified through China’s defeats in the war with France (1884-85) and Japan (1894-95) and the continuing scramble for concessions.
3. Many scholars and writers urged a more rigorous reform than that of self-strengthening with a focus on social, political and ideological change; Kang Youwei was the most influential proposer of change
4. The growth of western ideas in China through the treaty ports and foreign intellectuals, as well at the ideas taught at Christian Missionary schools (Kang was one) promoted extreme reform.
5. The increased number of active political scholars and the growth of patriotism among them encouraged social and political reform and strengthening

The New Generation of Reformers

The movement involved four main figures:

1. Emperor Guangxu
   - The tenth emperor of the Manchu Dynasty was during the 100 Days Reforms.
   - He had seen the success of Japan’s socio-political restructuring and realized the same was necessary for China to follow militarily and economically.

2. Kang Youwei
   - The emperor’s advisor
   - Was controversial as he convinced the emperor that abolishing century-long traditional practices (such as the examinations system) and altering the Confucian ideologies of the government body was necessary to militarily and economically modernize.
   - The old imperial system was outdated for new problems of foreign relations and modernisation (Emperor must take power back from Cixi)

Vs.

3. Dowager Empress Cixi
   - Was the mother of Emperor Tongzhi
   - Battled for absolute power after his death with Emperor Guangxu
   - She was conservative and tried to suppress the controversy of the progressive Hundred Days Reform movement.

4. Yuan Shikai
   - A powerful military figure
   - Helped the Dowager Empress stage a coup d’etat against Guangxu and his progressive supporters.

The Proposals of the Hundred Days Reform

The following Areas of Change were proposed to China by the progressive reformers:

Education:
1. Civil service examination were made more relevant to the modern world.