The capitalist world system seemed secure in the early 20th Century, and the core societies appeared to be in firm control of the system. These very successes were creating destabilizing pressures however:

1. An intense expansionist rivalry within the core and semi-periphery. Because the world was, in a sense, “filled up” by 1910, further territorial expansion pitted core powers and semi-peripheral powers against one another and generally required war.

2. Soon after a peripheral society was brought into the world system, natives who were Western-educated would begin to formulate nationalist, anti-core ideologies and to use their skills in order to organize classes that had serious grievances against the world system. The more a peripheral area was developed, the more likely it became that some kind of reaction would take place there against the obvious disadvantages of peripherality.

3. By 1910, several semi-peripheral societies, notably Russia and Japan, were partially successful in developing economies and state machineries that could challenge the core’s domination of the world.

4. The number of participants in the world system was expanding as societies with plentiful resources and populations made the transition from peripheral to semi-peripheral status.

5. Class structures in the core were changing---working classes were becoming better organized and middle classes were growing. Elites were pressured to find methods of responding to these groups---symbolically, with nationalistic rhetoric and materially by redistributing wealth inside or finding more wealth outside in the world system.

In the end, the major destabilizing element in the capitalist world system involved the nature of industrial capitalism itself. The pressures for growth and expansion could not stop in 1910. The competition became greater than ever.