

According to the Anarchist FAQ:

Modern civilization faces three potentially catastrophic crises: (1) social breakdown, a shorthand term for rising rates of poverty, homelessness, crime, violence, alienation, drug and alcohol abuse, social isolation, political apathy, dehumanization, the deterioration of community structures of self-help and mutual aid, etc.; (2) destruction of the planet's delicate ecosystems on which all complex forms of life depend; and (3) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

Orthodox opinion, including that of Establishment “experts,” mainstream media, and politicians, generally regards these crises as separable, each having its own causes and therefore capable of being dealt with on a piecemeal basis, in isolation from the other two. Obviously, however, this “orthodox” approach isn’t working, since the problems in question are getting worse. Unless some better approach is taken soon, we are clearly headed for disaster, either from catastrophic war, ecological Armageddon, or a descent into urban savagery — or all of the above.

Anarchism offers a unified and coherent way of making sense of these crises, by tracing them to a common source. This source is the principle of **hierarchical authority**, which underlies the major institutions of all “civilized” societies, whether capitalist or “communist.”