These are dangerous times. We are facing the biggest upsurge of the far right since the 1930s. Everywhere they are using racism and hostility to migrants to build support and spread hate and fear. Trump’s election victory and the Brexit vote were welcomed by the far right everywhere.

All over Europe, including Britain, they are on the march, and building strong international links. Here the June 9th ‘Free Tommy Robinson’ demonstration in London saw the emergence of street fascism at a level not seen since the 1930s, while the Tory press stokes a toxic environment of anti-migrant and Islamophobic racism. Extreme right-wing groups were joined by UKIP, collapsing at the polls but now trying to build a base among these street thugs.

In Hungary, Denmark, Austria, Italy and Poland the far right is in the government. Harsh measures against migrants, refugees and Roma people are already underway, as well as sweeping attacks against democratic rights, women and LGBT minorities.

Why did this happen? Centre-left as well as centre-right parties administered neoliberal cuts and privatisation policies from the 1980s and supported America’s wars. Since the 2007–8 economic crash, sections of the working class and oppressed have been thrown into poverty and despair by this same neoliberal offensive. Backed by the immensely powerful right-wing media, governments are blaming migrants for the economic crisis brought about by their own policies.

There has been a political polarisation, with some advances for the left, but overall the right has made much more electoral progress.

In Britain, anti-racists and opponents of Tory Brexit have to recognise two central facts. First, Islamophobia is the cutting edge of racism, as it is in the rest of Europe. And second, that anti-migrant racism was at the heart of the campaign for Brexit. The Brexit vote strengthened the far right, deepened Islamophobia, and led to an increase in xenophobic and racist attacks.
How can we explain the Trump phenomenon? He is the personification of the far right response to American economic decline. For over 20 years the United States has tried to re-establish its economic and political dominance through neo-liberalism at home, impoverishing millions, and militarism abroad, through endless wars and trying to tie its NATO allies to its economic and political demands. Trump is the latest and most extreme manifestation of this.

The on-going, off-again threats against North Korea are in part aimed at pressurising China. Sanctions against Iran target the billions of dollars of trade re-starting between Iran and China. Now Trump’s 2018 defence budget – over a trillion dollars – is arming the US military with high tech weapons to wage simultaneous wars against Russia, China and Iran. US troops are on the ground in Yemen, supporting Saudi Arabia’s genocidal war, in Syria and in a dozen African countries. America is massively increasing its military capacity to hit China, and beefing up its military forces in Eastern Europe to confront Russia.

Trump and his team – reinforced by the addition of national security advisor John Bolton and secretary of state Mike Pompeo – are escalating their economic nationalist policies by launching a global trade war. Retaliation against steep US tariffs has come from both Europe and China, and this conflict risks tipping the world economy into a new recession. On top of that Trump has pulled the US out of the Paris climate change accord, further threatening the world’s environment.

Trump’s international and domestic policies are closely interlinked. Militarisation and trade wars have deepened a new wave of anti-Black and anti-Latino racism, which is topped off with family separation and other punitive measures against migrants at the Mexican border, and the purge and witch hunt being run by agents of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), conducting large sweeps in communities from Georgia to Los Angeles, going into homes and factories, and deporting many thousands. Like anti-Communism in the Cold War, anti-migrant and Islamophobic racism are the essential props of Trump’s-style xenophobia and the centre of his political support.

This ‘hostile environment’ towards migrants extends to people of colour and has resulted in the shooting of dozens of mainly young Black people by the increasingly militarised police forces, and repression of Black Lives Matter demonstrations. Full spectrum attacks from Trump have also resulted in the growing war against abortion with decisions making it increasingly difficult to obtain legally. Dubbed by Mike Pence as ‘the most pro-life president in history’, Trump was the first president to appear on the annual ‘March for Life’ and now has the opportunity to reverse ‘Roe v Wade’ through his new appointment to the Supreme Court.

How can we explain the Trump phenomenon? He is the personification of the far right response to American economic decline. For over 20 years the United States has tried to re-establish its economic and political dominance through neo-liberalism at home, impoverishing millions, and militarism abroad, through endless wars and trying to tie its NATO allies to its economic and political demands. Trump is the latest and most extreme manifestation of this.