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**RT HON BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, good morning, everybody, and thank you very much, Shobhana, for that very, very generous introduction. I say to my wife, which I’m one of the tallest figures on the British political landscape, not yet, but it’s fantastic to be here and be at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit. Thank you for the invitation, thank you to the Aditya Birla Group, and great to be back here in this incredible Taj Palace.

Three decades ago, I came here for the first time for a family wedding. I don’t think there are any veterans of that occasion here; maybe there are actually. And that was then that first exhibited my mastery of Indian wedding dances, as you know. Light bulb, light bulb, motorbike, motorbike is the rhythm that I learned then. I’ve come back since on many delegations, both as mayor and then as foreign secretary, and as prime minister to this country. I’ve come to love this city and the country very much.

But no mission that I’ve led has been as successful as the one we had in April of this year, where we arrived in Gujarat and we were greeted, it was like being (Fashin Kandota?). There was pictures of me everywhere, and literally thousands of people dancing in the streets. And with Prime Minister Modi, we discussed the future of the UK-India partnership and we had fantastic talks.

And since then there have been results. Yes, India's become the number one supplier of overseas students for the UK, 108,000 Indian students in the UK helping to support our higher education industry. We’ve seen British Master's degrees recognized for Indian academic and professional purposes, and we have seen the first results of the famous Modi-Johnson deals on shrimps and apples, by which we agreed to take more Indian shrimp, while you agreed to take more British apples. (I don't know if everybody has?) fulfilled their side of the bargain. But even without a free trade agreement, we've seen trade between our countries go up by 28%.

So now, as our countries go to the next level of what Narendra Modi and I set out as the UK-India 2030 Roadmap, a comprehensive strategic partnership, there is one small detail of my political CV that in the interest of full disclosure, I should draw attention to. Anyone in the audience who has not been paying attention to the *Hindustan Times* or to the introduction, that is, of course, that I am no longer prime minister. I must point that out to you.

But it is a sign of my commitment to the UK-India relationship that the government that I was proud to lead, boasted more ministers who could trace their origins to India than any other government in the world, apart from India obviously, (where I have a lot of Indian friends?). I had a Home Secretary, a business secretary, a health secretary, financial secretary, an attorney general, a president of COP, and of course, a chancellor. I promoted them all. I encouraged them all to think that there was no possible obstacle that could stand in their way.

And the crowning achievement of my approach is that my replacement himself is of Indian origin. And I know that under Rishi, this relationship, so strong and so dynamic, is going to follow the same phenomenal upward trajectory.

We need each other. We need each other now more than ever, because as Prime Minister Modi said, as internal affairs Minister Jaishankar has said, we live in dangerous and turbulent times. And even if in the UK and India were not drawn together by ties of love and sentiment and family, as we are, certainly in my case, even if we were not drawn together by the ties of trade and commerce, actually (so dense?) and so intricate nowadays, it's hard to work out which is a British company and which is an Indian company.

Even if we weren't brought together by the ties of economic self-interest, we would be drawn together for this further and vital reason that we two democracies, one of the oldest and certainly the largest democracies in the world, we are forced to cope together with the irresponsible and sometimes dangerous behavior of the world's coercive autocracies.

And when we look at the tragedy of Ukraine as a result of Putin’s vile and unprovoked invasion, I believe we can make three confident predictions. First, that Putin will lose. Putin will lose, and deservedly so. He has been beaten by the simple heroism and love of country of the Ukrainian people. And no, I don't think that there is a deal that Ukrainians can or should do. They cleared the Russian invaders out of (inaudible), they might clear them out of Kherson. And I can tell you that the United Kingdom will continue to support them economically, politically, militarily, until they take back their country, until the Ukrainians can say again that they have a free, sovereign, and independent Ukraine.

And by the way, and I know that people, sensible people will be thinking about this. I don't think we need to worry about how Putin will manage his defeat. He is, after all, a master of propaganda. He seems able to persuade the Russian people that black is white.

When this happens, and it will, he will be able to claim that he has vaporized the so-called Nazis in Ukraine, like the climax of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* or whatever. He can say that he protected the Russian language and culture, or in some way achieved the objective of his special military operation. But that's not our problem. That's for him. And all the polling evidence I've seen suggests to me that the Russian people will swallow it.

And by the way, my second prediction is that Russia's exports of military equipment will be badly affected around the world as a result of war. In fact, this has been a disastrous advertisement for Putin's war machine. 60% of his precision guided missiles have turned out to be duds. That is less accurate than my first serve in tennis. The tanks have had their lids blown off biscuit tins, and Chinese made tires that exploded in their armored cars. Even now – even now, nine months on, Putin’s planes do not control Ukrainian airspace. Everybody said when he began his invasion, it would take him only hours to achieve mastery of the air.

My third prediction is that across the whole of Asia, this disastrous miscalculation by Putin will severely weaken Russia and greatly strengthen China. You can see what's happening already in Kazakhstan. You can see it in Uzbekistan. You can see it across the whole of the former Soviet Union and beyond. The bear is looking increasingly more beaten and forlorn and pushed around by an assertive, giant, kung-fu panda.

What Putin did before the Ukraine invasion, only one world leader he troubled to consult, he went to the Beijing Olympics and was given the green light there. And increasingly you can see that he is the (pope?) of Xi Jinping.

And so, I would argue that given the stresses and strains of tension that we're seeing across the Asia-Pacific region and the obvious (read-across?) between what's happening in Ukraine and what could happen in Taiwan and the South China Sea, it is ever more vital that we two democracies work together for our economic health and for our collective security and stability.

The great news is that we are working more closely together. And the fact that we're all here at this morning breakfast meeting, seated cheek by jowl, looking very attentive and happy, is a testament to at least one result of that growing partnership.

Do you remember the start of the COVID pandemic, and everybody said that we had to follow the Chinese model for dealing with it? People said how brilliant they were, how ruthless they were in locking people up in filing cabinets and broom cupboards. People said that it showed that democracies aren't as good as authoritarian states at dealing with a pandemic. Remember all that? Yeah?

Well, it was our two democracies that came together to protect the human race with billions of doses of vaccines distributed around the world. And it was UK scientists who came up with the AstraZeneca vaccine, invented in Oxford, then produced by Mr. Poonawalla’s Serum institute. I don't know if Mr. Poonawalla is here, but I’ve had several talks with him. That Serum Institute in India produced such enormous quantities of AstraZeneca vaccine, that we used it in the UK. And I am personally the beneficiary of AstraZeneca masala. I've got it running in my veins. I have not had COVID since, by the way.

And so let me ask you, which of you had Sinovac or Sinopharm or Sputnik or one of the ones produced by the autocratic country? It was a feature of the vaccines that were produced by the democracies that they actually worked.

And so, look, I look at our Chinese friends now and we should all be, I’m a fervent admirer of Chinese culture and civilization. But I rang my father a few weeks ago and found he was in Chengdu, in the Serengeti Hotel on the 24th floor. And he’d been there for ten days. He said he watched *Godfather* one and *Godfather* two, even *Meet the Fockers*, which he told me was even funnier in Chinese. And then when he finished his quarantine, he found that the whole city was then put into lockdown and Chinese cities today are being put into lockdown.

Look at us today here in the Taj Palace Hotel in Delhi, happily shaking hands, no masks that I can see, no lockdown, living advertisement we are for a democracy, free market, capitalist, pharmaceutical companies and UK-India collaboration.

That, for me, is the lesson. It shows how much good the UK and India can do together. 25% of medicines in the NHS are produced in India. The pharmacopeia of the world were working together to tackle antimicrobial resistance. We’re working together on climate change.

And by the way, I can tell you that in the UK, we're already starting to see the effects of climate change. I don't know whether you saw, but in July, in Westminster, in London, the temperature exceeded 40 degrees. That's something for Britain. We're not used to 40. We find that more or less unbearable. British people simply cannot take decisions in that kind of heat, which may be to blame for some of the curious political convulsions we saw. There are many things for which I blame global warming. But who knows what future historians may decide?

So we're collaborating with India, and I salute Prime Minister Modi’s one sun, one world, one grid initiative. We’re working together with him Indian concerns on green technology, (inaudible) all that.

But that is not enough. And given what I have said about the geostrategic uncertainties that we face about the world's current trade crisis caused by the Ukraine wars (inaudible), given what I've said, Putin is going to lose, the weapons systems that they have are not what they've been cracked up to be, given that his catastrophic venture in Ukraine will greatly strengthen China, it is vital we rise to the occasion and do more together, UK and India, for our collective defense and security.

And some of you may dimly remember the areas for greater cooperation that Prime Minister Modi and I agreed (inaudible) helicopters, a marine electric propulsion system, the future combat aircraft system, the new fighter that we're interested in building, subsea radars, cyber, a huge, huge agenda for high-tech military collaboration, and the possibilities are immense. But we've got to get on with it because the threat is growing.

I know that Prime Minister Modi (definitely wants to do this?). I know that my government in the UK wants to do it. Let’s put aside the obstacles and get on. And by the way, while we're at it, let us finally deliver that free trade agreement, which mysteriously seemed to have developed a flat tire since I left office. Prime Minister Modi and I said it would be done by Diwali. (Inaudible) Diwali. I'm not going to wait until the next Diwali before we do that free trade deal.

I wonder what the holdup is. Is the Indian dairy lobby really determined to keep out British cheddar? What about Stilton? (How do you feel about Stilton?)? Not even the wonderful “Make in India” campaign, which I support, will be able to come up, I think, with an Indian version of Stilton. Why should British consumers be deprived of good value footwear made in India? I think the opportunities are enormous. I will say nothing about Scotch whiskey, which was the theme of one of my motions (inaudible) I seem to remember.

But again, the opportunity. Why should there be a tariff of 150%? Surely as India develops its phenomenal (inaudible), and by the way, the changes I’ve seen in the last three decades (inaudible) have been astonishing. Surely it will be a good thing, not a bad thing, if India had better access to UK expertise in finance and capital markets, just as it was a good thing for me when I was mayor of London that we had access to the genius of Indian software programmers who did the signaling from Hyderabad to the Jubilee line.

So let's take all this to the next level. Let's get that free trade deal done because it is the height of insanity that we have beautiful British Jaguars and Land Rovers made in the West Midlands that face huge tariffs, 125% tariffs, on import to India, when Jaguar-Land Rover is of course owned by a great Indian company.

So at a time of economic gloom and uncertainty, sometimes overdone in my view, but there’s unquestionably a great deal of uncertainty at the moment, let's get that deal done for the benefit not just of our businesses, but for our hard-pressed consumers and for both our populations.

I'm an optimist because I think that the events – and I'm an optimist about our partnership. The events of the last year have actually shown that to be a democratic country, as we both are, is a source of enormous strength.

Look at Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine, made virtually alone in a kind of COVID bubble, with no one to contradict him, warn him, relying on the advice of strange (inaudible) orthodox Rasputin types, and then look at Xi’s zero COVID policy.

Again, what the last year has taught us is that when the leader of a (coercive?) autocracy embarks on a disastrous policy in which his – I'm afraid it’s always, always his – it is always his –in which his ego is (inaudible) engaged, there is nothing and no one that can stop this.

That's why democracy matters. That's why it's the worst system in the world, except for all the others. And that's why events like this conference are so important, because you need a robust and a free media to shine a light on the decisions that are made by our leaders, to hold our rulers to account, and to tell truth to power. Even if the truth is sometimes hard for an Indian audience to accept like news about the (inaudible) cricket against (inaudible). (Laughter.) You've got to tell those tough truths, and you need a great organ of the free press like the *Hindustan Times* to break that news and explain what went wrong, without fear or favor, and to ink on it, as our free press does, with joint values, liberty, pluralism, and democracy.

And that's why I'm optimistic about our partnership and why, as we go to the next level, and we will, that we will succeed as democracies in making the world safer and more prosperous and a better place in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Thank you all very much for your invitation and your kind attention this morning. Thank you.

(Applause.)

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