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Good morning everyone it is great to be back here in this hotel where three decades ago I first learned the rudiments of Indian dancing at a family wedding

light bulb light bulb motorbike motorbike

and I learned to love this city and this country

and since then I have led many delegations from the UK

but none was more successful than our mission last April

when we were welcomed by PM Modi to Gujarat and had fantastic talks

on our partnership

and in the six months since then

we have seen India become the number one supplier of overseas students to the UK

108,000 of them

we have seen British masters degrees recognised for Indian academic and professional purposes

we have seen the first fruits of the Modi-Johnson deal on shrimps and apples

India agreed to take more apples and we agreed to take more shrimps

and even without a free trade agreement – yet – we have seen trade between our countries go up by 28 per cent

and as our two countries now go to the next level of the UK-India 2030 road map

of the comprehensive strategic partnership that Narendra Modi and I agreed

there is one small detail of my political CV that

in the interests of full disclosure I feel I should draw to the attention of anyone in the audience who hasn’t been paying attention

and that is I am no longer PM

but it is a sign of my commitment to this relationship that the UK government under me boasted more ministers who could trace their origins to India than any other government in the world

a home sec a health sec a business secretary a financial sec to the treasury an attorney general a president of Cop and of course a chancellor

I promoted them all

I encouraged them to believe that there were no obstacles in their path to yet higher office

and the crowning achievement of my approach is that my replacement is himself of Indian origin and I know that under Rishi

this relationship – so strong and so dynamic – is going to follow the same extraordinary upward trajectory

and we need each other more than ever

because PM Modi has said

and as EAM Jaishanker has said

we live in dangerous and turbulent times

and even if we were not drawn together by ties of love and sentiment and family

as we are

even if we were not drawn together by the ties of trade and commerce

so dense and so intricate that sometimes it is hard to work out whether a product is British or Indian

even if we were not drawn together by economic self interest

we would also be drawn together for this further and vital reason

that we are two democracies who are forced to cope together with the irresponsible and sometimes dangerous behaviour of the world’s coercive autocracies

and when we look at the tragedy of Ukraine

and the results of Putin’s vile and unprovoked invasion I believe that we can make three confident predictions

the first is that Putin will lose – and deservedly so

he is being beaten by the simple heroism and love of country of the Ukrainian people

and no I don’t think there is a deal that the Ukrainians can or should do

they have cleared them out of Kharkiv, they have cleared them out of Kherson and we in the Uk will support them until they have taken back their country

until they can say again that they have a free sovereign and independent Ukraine

and nor do I think we need to worry about how Putin will manage his defeat

he is the master of propaganda

he seems to be able to persuade the Russian people that black is white

he can claim that he has vaporized the Nazis in Ukraine, like the end of Raiders of the lost ark

he can say that he has protected Russian language and culture or that in some way his special operation has achieved its objectives

that is not our problem

that is for him – and all the polling evidence I have seen suggests to me that the Russians will swallow it

and my second prediction is that Russia’s exports of military equipment will be badly affected around the world

because this war has been a disastrous advertisement for Putin’s war machine

60 per cent of the precision guided missiles were duds

- that is less accurate than my first serve in tennis -

the tanks had their lids blown off like biscuit tins and the Chinese made tyres exploded beneath the armoured cars

Putin’s planes – even now – do not control Ukrainian airspace, even though everyone said that the war in the air would be over in hours

and my third prediction is that across the whole of Asia this disastrous miscalculation will massively weaken Russia

and greatly strengthen China

We can see it in Kazakhstan, we can see it in Uzbekistan

we can see it across the whole of the former Soviet Union and beyond

the bear is looking increasingly moth-eaten and forlorn

and pushed around by the giant kung fu panda

when Putin was thinking of invading Ukraine, he sought the permission of only one man

he went to the Beijing Olympics and got the green light

he is increasingly the punk of Xi

and given all the stresses and tensions in the Asia Pacific region

the obvious read across, for instance, between Ukraine and Taiwan

it is ever more vital that we two democracies work together

for our economic health and for our collective security and stability

and we are – the mere fact that we are all here in this room is a testament to our growing partnership

do you remember the start of covid?

everyone said that we had to follow the chinese model

and how brilliantly they were at locking people up in broom cupboards and filing cabinets

and people said that it showed that democracies aren’t as good as authoritarian states at dealing with a pandemic

do you remember that nonsense?

well let me tell you

it was our two democracies that came together to protect the human race with

billions of doses of vaccine distributed around the world

It was UK scientists who came up with the astra Zeneca vaccine

invented in Oxford

and then produced by Mr Poonawallah’s serum institute in such enormous quantities that many of us in the UK actually had an indian jab

I am the personal beneficiary of astra Zeneca masala and I have not had covid since

and let me ask

which of you had sputnik? who had sinovac and sinopharm?

it was a feature of the vaccines that were produced by the democracies that they actually worked

and look at our chinese friends now

I am a fervent admirer of Chinese culture and civilisation

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 had been there for 10 days

and he had watched godfather one and two

and even meet the fockers – even funnier in chinese

and then when he had finished his quarantine he found the whole city was put into lockdown

look at us today

happily shaking hands, no masks, no lockdown

living advertisements for democracy and free market capitalist pharmaceutical companies

and the lesson for me is that the UK and India can do so much good together

25 per cent of NHS medicines are made in India

we are working together to tackle anti-microbial resistance

and climate change

and we are really starting to see the effects of global warming in the UK

it was 40 degrees in London in July

a record temperature for that city

British people are simply not used to taking decisions in that kind of heat which may explain some of the curious political convulsions we saw

and so we are collaborating on green technology

and I greatly admire PM Modi’s One sun one world one grid campaign

and yet this is not enough

given everything I have said about the world’s current crisis

given that Putin is going to lose

given that his weapons systems are not what they are cracked up to be

given that his catastrophic venture in Ukraine will greatly strengthen China

it is vital that we rise to the occasion and do more together for our collective defence and security

and some of you may remember the headlines of the areas for cooperation that we agreed in April

medium lift helicopters

marine propulsion systems

future combat aircraft

the possibilities are immense and the threat is growing

I know that PM Modi wants to do it

I know the Uk wants to do it

let us put aside the obstacles and get on and do it

and while we are at it let us deliver that free trade agreement

which mysteriously seems to have developed a flat tyre since I left office

PM Modi and I said it would be done by Diwali

I don’t want to wait until next Diwali

What is the hold up?

is the Indian dairy lobby really determined to keep out British cheddar ?

what about stilton?

I bet that not even the excellent Make in India campaign has been able to come up with an Indian version of stilton

And why should British consumers be deprived of excellent footwear made in India

the opportunities are enormous

I will say nothing about whisky, which was the theme of one of my more disastrous speeches

but surely, as India develops at this phenomenal rate – and the changes I have seen since I first came to this hotel have been phenomenal

surely it would 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 I had access to the software geniuses of Hyderabad who wrote the signalling code for the London Underground

Let’s take it 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 on import to India

when Jaguar Land Rover is of course owned by a great Indian company

and at a time of economic gloom and uncertainty let’s get that deal done not just for the benefit of our businesses

but for our hard pressed consumers

and I am an optimist because for me the events of the last year have shown that to be a democratic country 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 or warn him

and relying on the views of strange bearded orthodox Rasputin lookalikes

look at Xi’s zero covid policy

what the last year has taught us is that when the leader of a coercive autocracy embarks on a bad policy

in which his ego is fatally engaged

there is nothing and no one that can stop him

and that is why democracy matters, why it is the worst system in the world except for all the others

that is why events like this conference are so important

because you need a free media, like the Hindustan times, to shine a light on those decisions

and that is why I am optimistic about our partnership as we go to the next level

and why I believe we will succeed, as democracies, in making the world a safer and better place in the indo pacific region and beyond