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**LionTree LLC – Slopes 2024**

**Boris Johnson**

**Moderator: Aviva Roumani, Chief Corporate Development Officer, LionTree**

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**AVIVA ROUMANI:** It’s not every day that you get to sit with a former prime minister. You’re my first sit-down with a prime minister. But that’s kind of the beauty of frankly working at Lion Tree is things come your way pretty quickly, and you have to adapt. But it’s a real honor to welcome the Right Honorable Boris Johnson to the stage.

(Applause.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** It’s pretty hard to follow that.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** I agree, but we’re going to get into –

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** That was wonderful. So far.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** You need a good response when people make fun of your hair.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I know. It’s been going on –

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Yeah. No, no, no.

Well, thank you so much for being here. We have a lot to talk about, obviously, and there’s a lot happening in the world, as evidenced by all of the conversations that have taken place and will take place over the next couple of days.

But we’re obviously living in extremely sort of dangerous geopolitical times. There’s the war in Ukraine, in Israel, Iran proxy fights, as Dan and Ari talked about, obviously China’s growing influence.

The U.S. kind of led the sort of like post-World War II world sort of order. There was a nice relationship, obviously, and still is a very strong relationship between the UK and the U.S. There were the sort of partnerships of Churchill and Roosevelt, Thatcher and Reagan, Blair and Clinton.

Talk to us a little bit about that relationship and how you see the sort of world order, so to speak, evolving.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, that relationship is absolutely fundamental to the future prosperity of the world. But I just want to go back to the UK-U.S. relationship. I just want to go back to the very, very brilliant portrait I think Dan Schulman just gave of the problems we’ve got in the world today, and you just you just summarized it again, the war going on, an appalling war going on in Ukraine, this terrible situation in Israel, the specter of anti-Semitism on the streets of European cities that we haven’t of a kind that, frankly, I don’t think we’ve seen for generations.

There’s a very strong case for saying things are in a bad way, and you mentioned the number of wars, 183 wars I think you said, Dan, and there’s no doubt that you can make a very negative case about the world today.

But the truth is still that around the world, millions, billions of people are still being lifted out of poverty. More women are being emancipated than ever before. The human race actually is measurably improving its lot.

Now, there are things that we need to do, and in particular, the United States of America, because America is the world leader. All human institutions need a leader. America is the leader. There are things that we all need to do, the UK needs to do as well.

But I just want to, before I forget to say all this in the course of the next few minutes, I want to make my big point over, which I think is the key thing to do in business. Big point: Don’t be gloomy, folks. I’m not saying it’s all going to be okay, because it’s all very, very difficult. But we have the high cards. Liberal capitalist democracies, such as are represented here today, we have the high cards.

Something like this could never happen, a meeting like this fantastic conversation that LionTree organized, you could never have that in an autocracy. Nobody wants to invest in music, as far as I know, in North Korea or China. Who listens to Russian technofunk? Do Brazilian audiences, the young, the teenagers in Sao Paulo queue up to hear performance from Iran. No they don’t. No, they don’t. They want to hear the creative product of the liberal capitalist democracies, of which you guys play a huge and important part.

By the way, they don’t go to après-ski anywhere.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Right, no.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Did you ever hear of après-ski in North Korea or in Russia? Do Russians go to après-ski in Russia? The Russians go après-ski in Kosovo, actually, until they were quite rightly banned.

My message to you is we have the high cards. People basically want to be like Western liberal, capitalist democracies. This is the culture, this is the spirit of innovation that they deeply, deeply admire, and let’s make sure that our governments play the right cards, and we will prevail.

That’s the summary of what I want to say. I wanted to get that off my chest early before I forget it.

By the way, I’m normally attacked in the UK for being scruffy in appearance, and I’m delighted to see that I’m literally the only person in this room wearing a tie. It’s quite extraordinary. I’m thrilled by that. I hope you remember what a special effort I made. I did it for you.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Just to finish your thought, and it’s great that you’re remaining an optimist, but there’s obviously a lot of detractors out there. There’s a lot of conflict even inside the U.S. Do you feel, though, that from the sort of world stage the U.S.’s global influence has declined?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I said, I think the U.S., clearly the other economies are growing in importance. You have to be realistic about that. By the way, the answer is not to push those people away. The answer is to try to bring them with us, to persuade them, and to make the case. I don’t want to see a new Cold War. I don’t want to see more division. We’ve got to be smart about the way that we do this.

But we’ve also got to be optimistic about the United States of America. America still accounts for a third of global defense spending. It is by far the most important military power on the planet.

I don’t happen to think, or actually I may be wrong, but I’m afraid I’m not wrong, but I don’t think that China would do anything stupid in the straits of Taiwan because I think that the example of the disaster that Putin has already had in Ukraine should be deterrent enough.

I thank the United States of America for what it has done to support the people of Ukraine. The cash you’ve already given, 45 billion in military aid alone, has been of crucial importance to that country in fighting for their lives and for freedom.

The influence of America, America is still the arsenal of democracy, absolutely vital for the security of the world, and you’re proving it by what you do. I pray that the 60 billion will be released. I’m sure, by the way, that it will be.

But American tech, these are what the world wants to see, and all I think the world wants from America, what people like me want from America is just a little bit more self-confidence. I mean, it sounds weird, but actually this is the culture that people admire. Believe in it.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Let’s talk more about Ukraine. You’ve obviously been a very staunch supporter since day one of President Zelenskyy. You’ve been spending a lot of time with global leaders, including Hillary Clinton, focused on NATO. Do you actually think that a victory is possible in this conflict? What does it look like?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I do. I think that, look, Putin has already lost. Okay? Don’t believe the negativity, in the sense that he set out to prove that Ukraine was not really a country. He wrote an essay that you will remember in the summer of 2021, the mad mixture of Wikipedia and Nostradamus, in which he kind of said that this stuff about Yaroslav the Wise and whatever happened in Kiev in 800 AD. It was all about absolute rubbish. Absolute rubbish.

He then, in order to prove that Ukraine wasn’t really a country, he invaded with his tanks, and he literally expected the people of Ukraine to turn out and put a roses, garland his troops with roses. Of course they didn’t. They want to be Ukrainian. They want to be independent. They voted for independence in 1991, overwhelmingly. All he has done is guarantee and intensify the strongest national feeling that I’ve seen anywhere in Europe in the last 50 years.

He’s not going to win. He can’t win because he can’t break the spirit of the people of Ukraine. And even if which, “per impossibile,” he would have a military success, the Ukrainians would fight on and eventually overthrow him.

But there is a way for the Ukrainians to win. Very, very briefly, what they need to do is I think they probably need to concentrate their forces for the time being. They had made a big effort last year. But Putin has a massive area of vulnerability in Crimea, in the Crimean Peninsula. He does not want to lose Crimea.

What needs to happen now is that the Ukrainians need to be given the long-range artillery, the missiles, the HIMARS, the ATACMS, to threaten Crimea, which they currently can’t. It’s absurd that that bridge, the Kerch bridge is still there. Give the Ukrainians the kit they need really to threaten Crimea, and suddenly, you’re going to put a lot more pressure on Putin to compromise because one, politically, he really, really, really does not want to lose that, to be threatening Crimea.

That’s the way I see it could go. I don’t see Putin getting a military victory. I do see a long and difficult period. But ultimately – ultimately, the Ukrainians are going to win.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Can you talk, though, a little bit about your work with the group of people?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah, so what we’re trying to do is the problem that we’ve got is that we’ve encouraged Putin to invade by being chronically ambiguous about the status of Ukraine. From 1994 onward, we’ve made a series of statements about Ukraine and its membership of NATO, which we haven’t actually backed up. And so, Ukraine has hovered in this limbo state.

What we need to do is find a way of getting Ukraine into NATO, but the problem, the paradox is that you can’t get a country into NATO, according to the rules of NATO, whilst it’s at war and its boundaries are contested. Therefore, if that remains the rule, of course, you had a massive incentive to Putin to keep the war going.

Together with Hillary Clinton and a load of other people, we’re trying to find a way of fixing that problem and starting a process that is in conformity with the NATO rules, but that doesn’t give Putin this incentive.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** To pivot, of course, to another terrible conflict that’s happening in the Middle East, you obviously were one of the first leaders to visit Israel post October 7th. You actually told me today, you spent time as a young person on a kibbutz.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I did.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Tell you the story.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I was brutalized, I was put in the washing up for two weeks. I said, why, but I loved it. I went to a kibbutz when I was a kid, basically, because I always supported it. I supported it through all my life. It was great to hear the perspectives of Aria and Dan, but I don’t know what everybody else thinks.

I’ll tell you what I think. I’ll tell you what I think. I think it is unbelievable that people are marching on the streets of my city, of London, where I was mayor for eight years, and I never believed we would have had this sort of nonsense, and shouting “from the river to the sea.” I don’t think they have a clue what river they’re talking about, or which sea, from the River Thames to the channel. I mean, what are they talking about? It is a complete non-sequitur.

What happened on October the 7th was that Hamas organized the biggest massacre of Jewish people that we’ve seen since the Holocaust. Right? What do you expect? Whatever people may think about Bibi Netanyahu, this is all off the record, right? Nobody’s recording this. But whatever people may think about the prime minister of Israel, what is any elected leader in Israel supposed to do when you have 1,200 of your people massacred, and in the most appalling circumstances? I went to, as I’m sure others here have been, I went to some of the sites of those massacres, and what Hamas did, what those guys did was absolutely they must have been on drugs. It was sickening, absolutely sickening what they did.

What he’s supposed to do? Is he supposed to say to Hamas, would you mind very much allowing due process to take place in Gaza? Hamas, you’re the government of Gaza. We need the killers to be brought to justice.” Is that what he’s supposed to say? Hamas organized the killing. Hamas dreamt it up. They’re the government of that entity.

Israel has, in my view, absolutely no option but to go after these people. All of our hearts bleed for what’s happening in Gaza, and there is an appalling humanitarian problem, but hand the hostages back. There are still 150 people, including, I think, a baby, who have yet to be handed back. Give them back. Sort it out.

I just think that we’ve lost moral clarity when it comes to this thing. I’m conscious that I’m now out on a limb in the UK in saying this, but I think that what we’re seeing is a kind of potentiation, a recrudescence of the old spore of anti-Semitism that has been beneath the floorboards of European culture for hundreds and hundreds of years, and is starting to come out again. That’s what I think.

I think you can disagree with all kinds of things that Israel does, but in the end, I think that you’ve got to be clear about what Hamas did, and I genuinely don’t see the options open to any democratically elected politician but to go after those people.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** But let’s talk solutions, right? Because as you said earlier, you’re an optimist. Who do you think will actually help the U.S. and Israel, and most importantly or equally as importantly, the Palestinian people in terms of creating an actual stable Middle East? We’re coming off the Abraham Accords. Everybody here in this room does a lot of business globally. What do you think is really the solution here?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** The solution is Gaza is tragic because it used to be 1 million people. It’s now 2.3 million people. Many of these young men don’t have jobs. The solution is to have an economic integration of the whole area and to drive forward the reconciliation that was taking place between Israel and its Arab neighbors under the Abraham Accords. That is the solution. The solution is regional economic growth and prosperity. I happen to think, actually, that that solution is not dead.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** So who are the players?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** They’re all the people. It’s the government of Israel, but it’s also the government of Saudi Arabia, the Emiratis there. I think that the Europeans, my country, which historically had a huge role in helping to create the problem, if you think about what we did, we sold the same camel twice, several times, if you look at the history of what the Brits did.

We need to fix it. One way to help fix it is to support this process of reconciliation, but also to drive forward economic infrastructure integration because there’s a massive opportunity, it seems to me, for Israel, Jordan, Saudi, everybody to start putting in the stuff, the desalination, the clean power, everything they need for better future.

You ask what the way forward is? That’s what should happen. The malign actors, I think Dan, Aria said, is unquestionably Iran. Iran didn’t want this thing to work, right? I’m sure they played a role in inspiring Hamas to do what they’ve done. They need to be sorted out.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Shifting gears a little bit to sort of leadership and character, in the short time I’ve met you, and those that know you, know that you can be quite self-reflective and admit some of the challenges and some of the mistakes.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Bah.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Well, now is the time. Let’s talk a little bit about some of the key events that took place while you were prime minister. Brexit and COVID; any regrets? (Laughter.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah, about COVID, yes, I certainly regret very deeply whatever romance flowered between the bat and the pangolin in the Chinese cave or the lab that led to the human race being brought low by this Chinese virus? Yes, I – not – sorry, not a Chinese virus. I mean, it’s obviously a virus that – well, why not?

I guess I do regret that, and I thought it was a tragedy. Look, if I had my time again, would we all lock down in the way that we did? Would we have this kind of Leviticus-like prescriptions about how many people you can have in a – why did we get to this insane levels of complexity in trying to tell people how to lead their lives? I do regret all that, yeah.

Why did we do it? Because fundamentally, we didn’t know what else to do. In the absence of science, it was very, very interesting. We were like the children of Israel in the desert, coming up with some stuff that we thought could deal with contagious disease because we didn’t have any better ideas. But then we had a better idea. Since you mentioned, I think you mentioned Brexit –

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** I did.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You did, okay.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Yep.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** We had a better idea, and we had some vaccines. I think Aria pointed out that the vaccine rollout was one of the greatest things that happened in the last few years.

I’m proud to say that in the United Kingdom, during the time I was prime minister, we had the fastest vaccine rollout in Europe by miles. I dare to say it was, even notwithstanding all the ingratiating things I’ve said about the United States of America, which I don’t retract, it was faster than the United States of America by quite some.

Why was it? Do you know why? Brexit. Yes, it was. It was. Because weren’t – and hey, you won’t hear this from the BBC, you won’t hear this from the British establishment. You’ve got the one member, the one former member of the British establishment who will tell you the truth about this. We got out, because everybody else has signed up to stay in the EU, we got out of this thing called the European Medicines Agency, which meant that our medical health agency was able to approve Pfizer and AstraZeneca and Moderna two and a half months faster than our friends in the EU.

The result was that by March 2021, I – I mean we, I haven’t done it personally, but there’s lots of people in the UK, have vaccinated 45% of our population. In the EU it was 10%. Brexit actually, and people go crazy when I say this but it’s true, Brexit saved lives, just for starters.

By the way, since I’ve already talked a lot about Ukraine, I don’t believe that had we remained in the common foreign and security policy of the European Union, we would have had the independent approach and the leading approach that we had on Ukraine. Because you will remember, as students of foreign policy, that the Ukraine dossier was held by France and Germany, and they had this thing called the Normandy Process. Remember the Normandy Process and the Minsk Accords and all this absolute craven – craven appeasement, where Putin and Ukraine were treated as kind of like a warring domestic dispute, arbitrated by France and Germany, rather than the aggressor and the victim. That was wrong, and it needed to change. That wouldn’t have happened without Brexit and many, many other things besides.

We’re doing a lot on areas that have, I believe, a real interest to the group you’ve got here today, on the tech side, on biosciences, on all kinds, on financial services. The UK is regulating in a way that we think is looking to the future and not necessarily what the EU thinks we should. AI would be it would be another perfect example.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Well, let’s actually talk about that. You started your career after Oxford, actually as a journalist. Now after you’ve left office, you’re writing two books. You are an active contributor to multiple news platforms. The topic of misinformation and the role AI plays in that and social media, we’re going to talk about that over the next two days, and certainly this crowd here is very focused on it.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Who worries about AI very, very much? I like AI. I heard what you said, about 20% of people are going to lose their jobs. Really? Okay. They might lose their existing.

When we invented the internal combustion engine, it is absolutely true that in London, a whole lot of hostlers and grooms and people who had to curry comb horses at 5:00 in the morning and people who had to shovel horse manure off the streets of London, they all lost their jobs because suddenly, we didn’t need a horse-drawn vehicles anymore, and we had cars. Jobs were created in a whole new sector.

You also said, I think, that your programmers, your software guys have had a 20% increase in productivity. Right?

I think this thing is going to be a massive boon. I think it’s going to be a shakeup. I think it’s going to be difficult. But all technology is like that. Since the dawn of time, the human race has come up with stuff that’s made things, that’s revolutionized processes, and in the end, we’ve always made it work for us.

I can tell you right now, while I’ve been skiing today and I’ve had a most wonderful time – I didn’t fall over once, by the way. I did several black runs. You have a run here called Trump, by the way. Have you seen it? I didn’t even fall over on that one.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** We said we weren’t actually going to mention his name.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No, no, no, that’s right. Well, I say shamelessly drag it in.

But whilst on the slopes, I was able to confirm that my – and I can tell you my automatic AI lawnmower in Oxfordshire is mowing. It’s mowing now. And I can tell you – well, wait, wait, wait, wait. I can tell you where it is on my lawn. Wait. It’s loading. I haven’t got a signal. Damn. Yes, I can tell you. Okay, it’s in the top corner of the right bit by the duck pond. Isn’t that incredible? And it’s still working. Now, that, to me, is progress.

Are you really going to tell me this technology is evil? It’s wonderful. Honestly. There are going to be shake-ups, there are going to be problems. Yes, lots of people will lose old jobs. New jobs will be created. I say that’s another reason for being optimistic.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** On that note, we’re a little short on time, but the whole purpose of this room and being off the record and feeling part of this community and the warmth is he is open to take questions. We have mic runners.

Also, we’re very lucky you will be joining us for dinner. If you want to approach – may I call you Boris?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yes, of course, Aviva.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** He will be at dinner. But Jeff Benjamin (ph), why did I have a feeling? I had a feeling you would be first.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I will stipulate that Brexit saved lives and rolled things out faster. But at the end of the day, it appears that, by estimates, the average person in the UK is somewhere 8%-10% poorer than they would have been. But you see those numbers, right?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know, but that’s baloney.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** That’s my question. Are those numbers right?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No, those numbers, I mean the whole world as a result – I mean, I don’t know what those – the whole world as a result of COVID had a long period of opportunity cost. Worse than that, we had to pay a huge amount of money, as you did in the States, to help people through that period. We then had inflation afterwards. It’s been a rough old time.

But if you actually look at the GDP growth of the UK by comparison with Germany, Italy, Spain, other European countries since 2016, actually the UK comes out, if anything, slightly ahead, ahead certainly of those countries, Germany, Italy, Spain. They’re all, as far as I can tell, still members of the European Union. That’s not determinative.

Brexit, the key thing about Brexit, I would just say to long-term strategic thinkers such as yourselves, Brexit, it’s real, real virtue will not necessarily have been apparent immediately. There are some things like the vaccine rollout, some legislative changes we were able to do immediately. They’re fine, they’re good. But long term, it’s about having a different approach to regulation and government and being fleet of foot. Particularly in sectors like this I do think it will be an advantage. I don’t want to talk about what’s happening in the politics of my own country at all, but I hope that whatever happens, we will continue to take advantage of Brexit.

Let me give you one statistic, which goes back to the U.S. In 2008, roughly speaking, the EU with about 500 million, and the U.S. with about 330 million people, both had roughly the same size economy in terms of overall brute GDP. Today, because of all the things that I’ve been talking about that you, incarnate, the U.S., I think is now worth about $26 trillion to the EU’s $17 trillion or $16 trillion. In other words, there has been a massive acceleration by the U.S., and the EU, plus Britain, I’m sad to say, the EU plus Britain have not seen comparable levels of overhead. There are all sorts of reasons for that, but one unquestionably is the attitude to business and to wealth creation, the culture, the environment in which people are doing business.

I want my country, which was, after all, one of the places where capitalism really got going, notwithstanding the achievements of the United States of America, I want my country to recover some of that zap that we used to have. If Brexit gives us a chance to do that, which I think it does, it will be a truly, truly great thing.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Greg and then Yuri?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You mean supporting the Ukrainians?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** And most of it’s going to the U.S. defense industry, right?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Ask yourself, why have we got the worst war in Europe for 80 years? Why have we got a situation in which tens of thousands of innocent Ukrainian women and children have been massacred? Why? Because we were ambiguous about Ukraine’s status.

What I’m saying is that – and the only argument against having Ukraine in NATO was that it might be provocative to Vladimir Putin and provocative to Russia, and that the U.S., to your point, the U.S. would not want to be –

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** It certainly does. By the way, that is why that is, I think, the only way you’re going to get a long-term, peaceful settlement because if you want to stop someone like Vladimir Putin, you’ve got to make it clear that you’re willing to defend the territory.

The failure has been, as I say, a chronic, chronic ambiguity and weakness, which he has sensed and exploited. Si vis pacem, para bellum. If you want peace, prepare for war. NATO has been the most successful military alliance in history because we’ve meant what we have said.

What I’m trying to do with Hillary Clinton and others is get to a stage where Ukrainian boundaries are sufficiently secure and you have a concept of Ukraine that’s sufficiently accepted by all NATO members, that they’re willing to protect. It’s not just the U.S. that has doubts about this. But if we want to stop this problem recurring, we have to fix it.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.).

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** You can’t put them in tomorrow. I accept that. I accept that.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, actually, What is not clear is exactly what Article 5 entails.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Article 5 certainly means we have to come to the defense of Ukraine. It doesn’t say how. When you say boots on the ground, that’s not, in fact, clear from the text of Article 5.

But leave that aside. Let just assume that there’s no other way of doing it. I happen to think that it is the right thing. We’ve done it for the Baltic states. We’ve done it for other parts of the former Soviet empire.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah, and I accept that that’s the problem.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** But if you want to stop Ukraine from being permanent – but your solution is never to have Ukraine in NATO, if I understand you correctly, which I think is a fatal mistake. We’ve tried not having Ukraine in NATO.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** I’m going to put you both next to each other at dinner.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** We’ve tried it. We tried not having –

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Why not?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Sorry, no one is – I’m not asking the U.S. Sorry, please don’t misunderstand me. Nobody in this room should misunderstand me. I’m not asking anybody in the U.S. to put boots on the ground during a hot war in Ukraine, okay? I’m not asking for that. If you thought I was asking for that, then I – did anybody think that that was what I was saying? Because that was not what I was saying.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** No, that was not what I was saying. It really was not what I was saying.

What I was saying is that we need to find a way of making it clear to Putin that he’s lost the argument and that the ultimate destination of Ukraine is within NATO. Okay? Because we’ve exhaustively proved that not having Ukraine in NATO is a massive threat to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, and I would say that it’s a threat ultimately to the security of the U.S. as well, because – I know, I’m going to wrap this point up.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** I want to get – sorry.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** I’m not asking for boots on the ground, okay? I’m just saying, in the long term, you’ve got to get Ukraine in. If you want to fix this, get Ukraine in.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** All right, Yunnan, please, and then Yuri, and then we’ll wrap it up. As I said, we welcome Boris to dinner.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Hi. I’m going to make it a little easier for you now. Thank you for your support of Israel. I can tell you that a lot of people were appreciative when you were one of the first world leaders who went to come to Israel and visit the kibbutzes that were attacked. Thank you for that.

Two questions. First question is, which kibbutz you actually worked at? The second question is, sitting here today, a lot of people in Israel believe that Netanyahu is directly responsible for what happened, is not willing to take any responsibility, and people blame him for playing politics and personal politics to continue the war right now without any solution, any long-term solution after that, for the day after. What advice would you give him today, given his responsibility and the role that he plays in solving this situation?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Well, so the kibbutz I went to was called Kfar Hanassi, which is up in Galilee. Do you know the one?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic) is a big part of it, right?

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah. Anyway, I haven’t been back there for a long time, but it was a lovely place.

The advice I’d give to – you’ve heard me, my views about the problem that Israel has with Hamas. It’s a very, very difficult problem. I think it is also true, notwithstanding everything I’ve said, that the most passionate supporters of Israel, such as myself, do need to have some sense of what the vision is for the Palestinian people. That doesn’t mean that that has to be provided now in response to the violence, the terrorist attack of October the 7th. But ultimately, we need to know what the plan is.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Yuri?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** (Off mic.)

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Yeah, we need to accelerate what we’re doing to help Ukraine, and I think the 60 billion needs to be released by Congress, and I think we do need to be giving them the deep the deep fires, the long-range artillery. We need to be giving them this stuff as soon as possible.

Somebody earlier on, probably Dan, who said okay. Kissinger said if you could do something – maybe it was you, Aria, – Kissinger said, “If you’re going to do something eventually, do it immediately.” Well, that’s the whole story of what’s happened in Ukraine over the last two years. We’ve always done the right thing in the end, but it’s always been far, far too late. We need to give them the kit that they need now.

I’m sorry to say, I don’t agree that they are fated to – I don’t know that you said this, but I don’t agree that they’re fated to lose. I do think that, fundamentally, Putin has disproved his own point, and I do think that the Ukrainians are going to win. It may take a lot longer than I wanted. It may be very difficult. I’m not suggesting that Ukraine is going to be a member of NATO overnight. But unless you set a goal, I do think Ukraine will join the EU, and I do think Ukraine will eventually join NATO, and I think that those are credible and realistic goals to set.

Forty years ago, if you’d said that Poland was going to be part of NATO, or that the Czech Republic was going to be part of NATO, you’d say we’re all mad. Let alone the Baltic states. You’d say we’re all off our rocker. Well, they’re all part of NATO now. Macedonia is part of NATO.

NATO guarantees peace and stability, and it does it through strength. I accept that it’s tough to piece it all together, and you’ve got to get peace first. The point I want to make is you won’t get that peace unless the Mafia state in the Kremlin realize that they’ve fundamentally lost the argument, and that Ukraine has a different future now.

When people in Ukraine voted in 1991 to be a sovereign, free, independent country, they meant it, and that’s it. Now, because of the mistakes Putin has made, they’ve now chosen a fundamentally different path, and on the path towards Western institutions. You’ve got to show that NATO membership is part and a legitimate part of that ambition. If you say it’s never going to happen, of course, that’s what Putin wants to hear.

**AVIVA ROUMANI:** Thank you very much.

**RT. HON. BORIS JOHNSON:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

END