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**House of Lords**  
**Inquiry of the International Agreements Committee**

***UK accession to Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)***

Written Evidence from Dr Sarah Tzinieris

**Preface**

This is a submission of evidence based on research conducted at the Centre for Science and Security Studies (CSSS) in the Department of War Studies at King's College London. The views presented belong solely to me and do not necessarily reflect the views of King's College London. The submission is divided into two parts: the first part reflects on broad themes connected to the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) – where I essentially argue that the benefits of joining the CPTPP are mainly strategic rather than economic (and both of these imperatives also confer substantive risks); the second part seeks to answer some of the specific questions put forward to the Inquiry, in view of these being of special interest to the House of Lords.

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*4 August 2023*

## Preamble

- The economic benefits to the UK of joining the CPTPP mainly include creation of export opportunities (and in turn the creation of associated jobs), customs simplification for exporters, and lowering of domestic consumer prices. However, the relative value of the net economic increase – using the government’s own technical estimates – will be negligible, with just £2.0 billion added to the economy,<sup>1</sup> equivalent to less than 0.1% of GDP.
- Notwithstanding the negligible impact on GDP growth, it is worth pointing out that CPTPP accession represents the largest trade deal for the UK since leaving the European Union (EU). Once the UK becomes a fully-fledged member (expected in the second half of 2024), the bloc will account for a sizeable percentage of the global economy; using 2022 figures, the combined GDP of the CPTPP members is worth £12 trillion, representing 15% of global GDP.<sup>2</sup>
- The UK has bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with nine of the other 11 CPTPP members; these are Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam (but not Mexico or Brunei Darussalam).<sup>3</sup> While there are some provisions in the CPTPP that go further in terms of incentivising trade, the existence of FTAs already in place with the majority of members – and these including the largest CPTPP economies – minimises the potential economic uplift of joining the trade bloc.
- With the nine FTAs already in place, the scope for additional economic benefits is fairly limited. These benefits mainly stem from:<sup>4</sup>
  - Free trade arrangements with the other two CPTPP members: Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia
  - Provisions for a single set of rules of origin, enabling cumulation across all CPTPP countries (this makes it easier to qualify for preferential tariff treatment than under bilateral FTAs)
  - Increased market access for the UK than is currently in place under the existing FTAs
  - More ambitious provisions on some sectors, such as digital services
- If more countries were to join the CPTPP, there would be additional economic benefits for the UK, especially where it does not hold existing FTAs with these new members. But the economic gains would still only be modest. The world’s largest economy, the United States, is unlikely to rejoin the bloc, after withdrawing from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (the precursor to the CPTPP) in January 2017 on Trump’s first day in office. President Biden appeared to hint at rejoining it during his election campaign.<sup>5</sup> However, Washington’s creation in May 2022 of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) – which is considered an alternative, slimmed-down version of the CPTPP – appears to rule out US membership for the foreseeable future. The EU has been touted for membership but this is doubtful given the huge regulatory and political hurdles that would need to be overcome.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, China’s application is very unlikely to be accepted at the current time; and indeed countries like the UK and Australia can be expected to veto China’s application outright.<sup>7</sup>
- Despite the lack of a substantial economic imperative, there are attendant strategic benefits. Most obviously, the UK will be in a position to contribute to rule-setting within the CPTPP and thereby champion particular norms of global trade. This has an amplifying impact for the UK’s global role in influencing areas like international trade architecture, good regulatory practices and the rule of law. At the same time, the UK will need to be mindful of the sensitivities that exist around the dynamic of more developed CPTPP economies impelling less developed CPTPP economies over regulatory and legal practices. For instance, the environment is likely to emerge as a particular area of contention as it is linked to economic growth, and the less developed economies

will not want to countenance measures that they perceive hinder their growth in a disproportionate way.

- Another strategic benefit of CPTPP membership concerns the UK's recent prioritisation of the Indo-Pacific region. As the Integrated Review 2023 Refresh points out, CPTPP accession consolidates the UK's 'tilt' to the Indo-Pacific, delivering on the ambitions of the 2021 Integrated Review.<sup>8</sup> By deepening economic relations with its CPTPP partners, the UK is in an advantageous position to pursue broader foreign policy objectives for the region.
- This is a two-way dynamic: The UK's accession as the first member without an Indo-Pacific coastline takes the CPTPP from being an essentially regionally-based bloc to a globally-based one.<sup>9</sup>
- There are also geopolitical implications in the makeup of the CPTPP's evolving membership. The UK will be able to effect decision-making on the extension of membership to other countries; and it will be in a position to veto such applications, most salient relating to those of China and Taiwan (both formally submitted membership applications in 2021<sup>10</sup>).
- Historically the UK has tended to play a constructive role within international organisations. It takes its responsibilities seriously, contributes to capacity-building, and provides expertise in technical areas. As a result, the UK has often assumed an influential role in organisational decision-making. Despite its geographical distance from other bloc members and late entry, over time the UK may emerge as a policy innovator within the CPTPP.
- The International Trade Committee, before it was dissolved earlier in 2023, considered two areas in which the UK might be able to leverage its expertise in the CPTPP to regulate practice and establish norms – these being digital trade and the environment.<sup>11</sup> Assuming the UK's contributions are received positively by other members, the CPTPP provides the UK with another international forum that it can leverage globally to 'punch above its weight'.
- Augmented by the UK economy, the CPTPP has the potential to emerge as an increasingly influential critical mass of so-called 'middle powers'. In particular, this trade bloc committed to rules-based free-market practices will be in an advantaged position to impact decision-making within the World Trade Organization (WTO). Most obviously, the settlement of disputes in the WTO has been a challenge in recent years.<sup>12</sup> If the CPTPP is successful in addressing its own internal disputes and policy challenges, it could play an important confidence-building role within the WTO.<sup>13</sup>
- Of particular value to the WTO, the CPTPP contains modern rules governing the trade in services, including in key British exports such as financial services and professional services.<sup>14</sup> The bloc also provides advanced mechanisms to facilitate digital trade, to the benefit the UK's technology sector. Modern approaches to rules concerning the trade in services and data may be of potential interest to the WTO, again amplifying the CPTPP's role – and the UK therein.
- Another strategic advantage of an influential CPTPP voice relates to the bloc's rules on state-owned enterprises, which are much stricter than those required by the WTO. The CPTPP has a role to play within the WTO on restricting what many free-market economies perceive as unfair advantages conferred by China to its state-owned enterprises, which it is argued distort global markets.
- There is also a broader benefit of an enhanced CPTPP in the context of the creeping global trend towards protectionism and non-free market approaches, in part the corollary of rising strategic

competition and the backdrop of the ongoing US-China trade war. While the UK will undoubtedly remain a staunch US ally, the CPTPP provides an alternative framework in which to promote a more conducive approach to global trade.

- The UK's accession to the CPTPP will make the bloc a more attractive proposition to potential new members. The UK will be the second largest economy in the CPTPP, after Japan.<sup>15</sup> Costa Rica, Ecuador and Uruguay are aspiring joiners (and appear far more likely to be accepted than China or Taiwan).<sup>16</sup> Other contenders that have expressed an interest are South Korea, Philippines and Thailand, but all are yet to formally submit an application.<sup>17</sup>
- A tangential but important point is the UK's accession to the CPTPP confers a diplomatic triumph to Japan.<sup>18</sup> Tokyo has pushed hard for Britain's membership as a means to strengthen the CPTPP as an economic bulwark against the growing weight of China in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>19</sup> Both countries are likely to want to work together at the helm of the CPTPP which will further consolidate the UK-Japan relationship. Indeed, the two are already cooperating in a number of other areas, including security and defence with a recently signed UK-Japan defence agreement.<sup>20</sup>
- Yet, an issue in the CPTPP debate that has so far been overlooked is how the UK has conducted its negotiations so far fairly timidly, especially when one compares the tough line it took when negotiating its exit from the EU. The fact is the UK has not utilised its considerable leverage in pushing for a better deal in some particular areas (such as with Malaysia over palm oil imports). This point about utilising tools of statecraft should be prioritised at the current time when it holds maximum leverage over the negotiations, not least as it will become the second largest economy in the CPTPP. Certainly, the governments of Australia, New Zealand and Canada have all conducted tough negotiations to protect sectors such as agriculture and there is no reason why the UK should not hold out to maximise its interests.

## Questions posed by the Inquiry

### Introductory question

1. *What is your view of the overall likely economic benefit of CPTPP for the UK? What are your reasons for this view? Are Government projections realistic?*

- Business and Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch has stated that the CPTPP will bring “significant” economic benefits to the UK,<sup>21</sup> and that it will provide a “big boost” to the economy.<sup>22</sup> Even as recently as July 2023, the Department for Business and Trade issued a press release that stated the CPTPP would bring “major economic benefits”.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the government’s own technical assessments estimate the CPTPP will add just £2.0 billion annually to the economy,<sup>24</sup> which is equivalent to less than 0.1% of GDP.
- The economic benefits are likely to increase in the long term as the UK economy adjusts to CPTPP membership. However, there are no indications that the net contribution to GDP will go up or down significantly in the next few years; indeed the International Trade Committee’s report released in April 2023<sup>25</sup> used the same figure as produced in the 2021 CPTPP Scoping Assessment<sup>26</sup> of £1.8 billion – and the Department of Trade & Business’ impact assessment in July 2023 only increased this figure by £0.2 billion.<sup>27</sup>
- The economic benefits do not compensate for the losses incurred as a result of the UK leaving the EU. While this is now a moot point, it is worth making the comparison as the government has repeatedly played up opportunities outside the EU as being somehow an equivalent substitute for loss of trade with the EU. To drive home this argument about lack of equivalence, in 2022 (latest available data point) exports of goods and services to the EU were worth £340 billion, equivalent to 42% of total UK exports, while imports from the EU were worth £432 billion, equivalent to 48% of total imports.<sup>28</sup> The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) estimates that the UK’s departure from the UK in the long run will reduce both exports and imports by 15%, and at a cost of 4% of GDP (i.e., 50 times greater than the previous 0.08% figure).<sup>29</sup> The OBR has also said there is little sign to date that UK goods exports to non-EU countries have made up for lower exports to the EU.<sup>30</sup>
- There will be a small number of individual companies that may reap significant financial benefits by having access to the lucrative Asia-Pacific region which enjoys still relatively high economic growth as well as a growing middle class consumer base. Nevertheless, the UK’s industrial chain is not closely linked to the Asia-Pacific region,<sup>31</sup> and the geographic distance between the UK and current set of CPTPP members will continue to inhibit overall trade flows.
- Despite the small but overall net economic benefits, there are economic-related risks to be considered when determining the cost-benefit calculus of joining the CPTPP. In particular, advancing external economic competition, especially where introduced suddenly, can have unexpected harmful impacts on specific sectors, leading to company insolvency and job losses. Free trade deals also commit states to various legal and regulation obligations, which can complicate domestic regulatory processes. And they may increase private sector investment in areas of the economy that might not be suited for this purpose such as public health.
- Joining the CPTPP will constrain how the government can intervene in these areas since many of the CPTPP rules are legally binding. For example, an article in *The BMJ* (British Medical Journal) about the risks of joining the CPTPP notes that a simple obesity-tackling initiative like introducing calorie labelling requirements could be contested by foreign companies.<sup>32</sup> While such firms will

not wield any vetoing power over UK domestic legislation, external pressure within the CPTPP over time may degrade policies designed for public good. Other political parties in the UK will take note as the CPTPP's legal and regulation obligations are locked in to all future governments, unless the deal is renegotiated or rescinded.

- The CPTPP represents an improvement on some of the older bilateral agreements that the UK has with CPTPP members, these having no provisions in four particular areas: health, the environment, right to regulate in the public interest, and corporate social responsibility. The CPTPP contains more advanced and modernised mechanisms concerning these areas,<sup>33</sup> thereby bringing up to date some of the UK's older bilateral agreements. At the same time, the implications of these provisions should not be overstated since they are "voluntary".<sup>34</sup>
- The net economic benefits to the UK will also have uneven impacts across sectors. According to the government's own technical estimates, the largest economic benefits – measured on a gross value added (GVA) basis – will be concentrated in the services and industry sectors (broadly classified).<sup>35</sup> While 19 sectors are forecast to expand as a result of CPTPP accession, there are four that will grow less than they would have done otherwise. In the goods sector, those forecast to expand the most (in absolute terms) in GVA are motor manufacturing, textiles, apparel and leather; while the manufacture of electronic equipment and other transport equipment are expected to suffer GVA losses – directly linked to increased import competition.<sup>36</sup>

## **Agriculture**

*2. What do you think will be the effect of CPTPP access on geographical indications, and what impact might any changes have?*

- Under the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement,<sup>37</sup> there is a requirement for the UK to afford the same level of protection to products with characteristics linked to their Geographic Indication, referring to products that have a specific link to the place where they are being made. However, many states that do trade with the EU disagree on the use of GIs (including Canada, a CPTPP member) and the UK may need to obtain exemptions with the EU on this matter.
- A broader point about British agriculture is that the CPTPP's provisions on cumulation of origin have little economic benefit for this sector. Due to perishability, many UK agricultural goods are unlikely to be exported to other CPTPP members given the huge geographical distances involved. This point was made by the National Farmers' Union (NFU)<sup>38</sup> and the Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) in the International Trade Committee's Inquiry on CPTPP accession.<sup>39</sup>
- Meanwhile, the lowering of tariffs for foreign agricultural goods entering the UK market is a threat to the UK's agricultural sector. With potentially lower sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards, these could undercut domestic producers who will need to continue to abide by higher SPS standards.<sup>40</sup>

## **Non-agricultural market access**

*4. How might UK manufacturers gain or lose from the CPTPP provisions on cumulation of origin? How, if at all, are UK consumers likely to benefit?*

- Overall, there is an economic net benefit from the CPTPP provisions on cumulation of origin. The CPTPP provides a single set of rules of origin that specify whether a good is ‘originating’. This enables cumulation across all CPTPP members, making it easier for a good to qualify for preferential tariff treatment, as compared with bilateral FTAs. Nevertheless, as suggested by the UK Trade Policy Observatory, even if the CPTPP’s terms of tariff rate quotas are more generous than under existing bilateral arrangements, in reality the provisions will “only concern a handful of products”.<sup>41</sup>
- The reason why the net benefits are marginal is largely down due to the UK already holding FTAs with nine of the 11 CPTPP members. But it is also because of the terms of the CPTPP deal. Products are only eligible for preferential treatment if they *almost wholly* originate from within the CPTPP bloc.<sup>42</sup>
- It appears that UK consumers will benefit overall from the CPTPP provisions on cumulation of origin, but only marginally – and the negative impacts to certain sectors (such as electronic equipment manufacturing<sup>43</sup>) should be taken into account, with a holistic cost-benefit calculus.

## Services

*5. How far do you think the Agreement provides UK services firms with new market access or simply confirms existing access? Are there other benefits?*

- The CPTPP does not particularly facilitate new market access since there are already existing FTAs in nine of the 11 CPTPP members. However, it does provide an extra layer of legal protection and a degree of regulatory harmonisation across the CPTPP for UK service firms. The CPTPP also provides advanced mechanisms to facilitate digital trade, to the benefit the UK’s technology sector. As such, there is an argument to be made that the CPTPP is a vehicle for increasing business confidence. Firms operating in foreign markets tend to prefer predictability in the legal framework as well as mechanisms in place for protecting interests.<sup>44</sup> Yet while there is a common baseline established under the CPTPP, each member has its own existing trade laws – and some may contain more protection – so firms will continue to encounter different business environments in each country where they are doing business.

## The precautionary principle and food standards

*9. How might accession change the UK’s precautionary approach to sanitary and phytosanitary measures and risk assessments, and its approach to food standards regulations more generally?*

- The lack of equivalence within the CPTPP of the UK’s highly cautious approach to environmental and health risks – often defined as the “precautionary principle” – is a key area of concern. Partly the result of its prior long-term membership of the EU, the UK takes a highly cautious and comprehensive approach to the assessment of risk, and its regulatory framework (still) remains largely aligned to that of the EU. This means that UK regulators will resort to the precautionary principle where scientific evidence is incomplete or inconclusive, and the risk is still considered too high in view of the chosen level of protection.<sup>45</sup> In some such cases, regulators will not authorise the product; in other cases they might pursue an enhanced degree of protection, but they are not restricted by the cost-benefit trade-off of this enhancement.
- In the CPTPP, dispute settlement takes a different approach – essentially a scientifically-based cost-benefit approach, rather than a precautionary one. Chapter Seven on SPS measures maintains



the rights of signatory states to take measures necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health.<sup>46</sup> These measures must be “based on documented and objective scientific evidence”,<sup>47</sup> which is akin to the UK/EU approach. Where the CPTPP diverges is that parties shall “consider risk management options that are *not more trade restrictive than required*” [emphasis added].<sup>48</sup> Risk management here refers to balancing all interests, and that must be presumed to be financial ones too.

- Furthermore, Article 7.8 in Chapter Seven on ‘Equivalence’ contains provisions for the importing party to recognise the exporting party’s SPS measures. These require the parties to “apply equivalence” to “the extent feasible and appropriate”.<sup>49</sup> The equivalence provision places the onus on the UK to recognise the exporting party’s SPS procedures as equivalent, as long as it can prove this with “documented and objective scientific evidence”. If the UK was to contest equivalency, this could leave it open to challenge by another party regarding the UK’s approach to risk assessment. The corollary is that there are perverse economic incentives for the UK to recognise as equivalent the *non*-equivalent SPS measures of CPTPP members.

### **Investor-state dispute settlement**

*10. The UK has agreed to exclude ISDS provisions with Australia and New Zealand, but they are included for the other member states. What is your view on this approach?*

- The investor state dispute settlement (ISDS) system under the CPTPP presents particular risks of external influence by foreign companies. Under the ISDS system, foreign firms can initiate legal proceedings against the British government if it is deemed to have taken actions that negatively affect foreign direct investment, even if these actions are in areas of public good such as protecting the environment and human rights. Notably, the WTO does not use the ISDS system, in favour of only states – rather than non-state actors – being authorised to take legal action against another state.
- This raises the question as to whether the UK should seek to exclude ISDS provisions by means of side letters with *all* individual CPTPP parties (it has already done so with Australia and New Zealand<sup>50</sup>). There is precedent for this. New Zealand has excluded ISDS provisions with five CPTPP members, by either fully excluding the use of ISDS or providing for dispute resolution to avoid proceedings being initiated.

### **Environmental standards**

*12. What is your view on the implications of CPTPP accession for deforestation and palm oil imports? What effect might the accompanying UK-Malaysia joint statement have in this regard?*

- It is a positive development that the British government has recently begun to engage with the palm oil issue, including with the issuing with Malaysia of the ‘Joint Statement on Sustainable Agricultural Commodity Trade and Cooperation to Conserve Forests’.<sup>51</sup> However, this is simply a statement of intent and has no legal basis. It also contains no commitments about reducing deforestation, and simply provides vague assurances about supporting “sustainable supply chains” and “sustainable production of commodities” – and mainly focuses on communicating this information to “relevant stakeholders”.
- The Inquiry will already be aware of the devastating effects of palm oil plantations on deforestation, endangered species and social conflict, among other negative environment

impacts.<sup>52</sup> The government has also recognised this problem, and currently a tariff of up to 12% is applied on palm oil imports to the UK.<sup>53</sup> Environmental campaigners argue that eliminating the tariffs under the deal will increase palm oil imports and the financing of palm oil operations, incentivising further deforestation.<sup>54</sup> According to Greenpeace, palm oil activities “damage critical forests, peatlands, Indigenous lands and habitats for threatened species including orangutans”.<sup>55</sup>

- The Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) has argued that the UK will not be oversupplied with palm oil.<sup>56</sup> The AHDB provides an analysis trade data dating back to 2015/6 which shows that the UK’s imports of palm oil remained fairly static throughout, despite the price of palm oil at various periods becoming cheaper in relative terms than other types of vegetable oils. The AHDB’s research is important to take into account. Nevertheless, a percentage drop from (up to) 12% down to nil is a large discount for UK importers, and it seems improbable that lower pricing will have no impact at all on importation.
- Another issue in this particular strand of the CPTPP debate is that the UK doesn’t appear to have utilised its considerable leverage (its tools of statecraft) in pushing for a better deal with Malaysia over palm oil imports. If the AHDB argument holds true – i.e., lower-priced palm oil will not flood UK markets because “rape oil demand to some extent is inelastic”<sup>57</sup> – then presumably *retaining* tariffs also means that Malaysian palm oil imports will stay steady. This could be an effective foreign policy approach as it sends a signal that the UK remains concerned over deforestation and prioritises the environment.
- One of the advantages of UK accession to the CPTPP is raising standards across the bloc, and the environment should be central to this cause given the critical point we are reaching in the climate crisis. Notably, the EU has gone much further already than the UK by adopting a new law in April 2023 that obliges companies to ensure products sold in the bloc have not led to deforestation and forest degradation<sup>58</sup> – a de facto ban on palm oil.<sup>59</sup>
- Malaysia has much to gain from acquiring access to lucrative British import markets – and far more than the other CPTPP members which apart from Brunei already hold FTAs with the UK. Taking a robust approach to the Malaysian palm oil issue is highly unlikely to scuttle the UK’s accession to the CPTPP, and could do a great deal of good in signalling commitment to the environment and European environmental norms.

## Concluding questions

*16. Are there any other aspects of the CPTPP which you think are of concern for UK manufacturers, producers and consumers, and for UK interests in general?*

- There is insufficient resourcing and staffing of the CPTPP architecture at the current time. Most obvious is the absence of a permanent secretariat, which prevents expertise and experience being consolidated in one central independent institution. Furthermore, some of the smaller CPTPP economies have insufficient resources and staff to be able to interpret the provisions adequately.<sup>60</sup> Given the many regulatory and legal risks involved in membership, the UK should focus on capacity-building for the CPTPP.
- One of the areas that the questions posed in this Inquiry does not address is workers’ rights. This appears to be an oversight given that millions of workers are involved in CPTPP-related economic activity. Trade unions around the world, including in the UK, have expressed concerns that the CPTPP has no effective mechanism to enforce International Labour Organization (ILO)

standards.<sup>61</sup> Notably, the UK is becoming a signatory to a bloc whose membership includes countries where abuses of labour rights are widespread. For instance, independent trade unions are outlawed in Brunei and Vietnam.<sup>62</sup> Chapter 19 of the CPTPP on Labour provides for sanctions in cases of violations of labour standards commitments.<sup>63</sup> However, actual enforcement of this mechanism appears doubtful. A case would need to be brought that proves a link between labour rights abuses and CPTPP trade.<sup>64</sup>

- This is not a glib observation. In what was the first ever labour case brought under the arbitration mechanism of a FTA,<sup>65</sup> in 2014 the US launched legal action against Guatemala within the trading bloc CAFTA-DR over its failure to protect labour rights. A tribunal ruling in 2017 found in Guatemala's favour; while the US was successful in demonstrating that Guatemala had failed to enforce certain labour laws, it could not prove that the violation of workers' rights was "affecting trade".<sup>66</sup>
- The CPTPP provisions for labour disputes also require a member government to take a case against another government, rather than trade unions or other non-government entities having the right to do so.<sup>67</sup> This brings a risk of politicisation which could make the British government cautious about pursuing legal action against another CPTPP government in view of the negative impact on bilateral trade.

✚ *How might CPTPP accession affect existing trade relationships such as those with the EU?*

- There are not many areas where CPTPP membership is incompatible with a trade deal with the EU (and many CPTPP members already hold trade agreements with the EU). One aspect of divergence is the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement's requirement for the UK to afford the same level of protection to products with characteristics linked to their Geographic Indication, referring to products that have a specific link to the place where they are being made. However, many states that do trade with the EU disagree on the use of GIs (including Canada, a CPTPP member) and the UK may need to obtain exemptions with the EU on this matter.
- A more significant consideration is that if the UK was to rejoin the EU in the future, or rejoin one or both of the EU Customs Union and Single Market, it would need to exit the CPTPP (as well as other FTAs). This is because memberships of the EU Customs Union and EU Single Market are incompatible with holding independent trade agreements. Such a move would create disruption for the UK's trade within the CPTPP; it would also require various regulations to be changed back to conform to EU standards. However, given the UK's forecast low level of economic activity within the CPTPP bloc in relative terms, the broader opportunities of rejoining the EU (including various economic, strategic, political and security imperatives) might be deemed to outweigh these costs.
- But it is also worth bearing in mind that, in the event that the UK was to rejoin the EU, its CPTPP membership – particularly in terms of the UK no longer having harmonised regulations – could be potentially perceived from the EU side as an impediment.<sup>68</sup> Notably, the CPTPP is regarded in some wings of the Conservative Party as a vehicle to complicate potential future attempts by the Labour Party to rejoin the EU's Customs Union.<sup>69</sup>

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