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FROM *BRITAIN* TO *BRAND BRITAIN*: A FRAME-SEMANTIC AND CORPUS-INFORMED ANALYSIS OF METONYMIC REFERENCE AND METAPHORICAL CONSTRUAL

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Abstract

The article examines the reference and figurative construal of *Britain* in journalistic discourse. The data comprise 40 occurrences in the title and text of the Economist article *Brand Britain has bounced back* and 134 retained concordance lines from the News on the Web corpus. Combining Frame Semantics and FrameNet with conceptual metonymy, metaphor and constructional analysis, the study distinguishes locale-oriented and holistic national readings from access to inhabitants, institutions, processes and reputation. Predicates, constructions and discourse jointly guide reference and its elaboration through illness, motion, impact, functioning or growth. The Political_locales frame anchors locale readings without encompassing every associated target. *Brand Britain* is analysed as a left-headed YX compound whose contextual interpretation integrates COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION and NATIONAL REPUTATION IS A COMMERCIAL BRAND. Metonymic access and metaphorical construal are analytically distinct but frequently interdependent.
Keywords: country names, Frame Semantics, conceptual metonymy, conceptual metaphor, metaphtonymy, compounding.

1. Introduction

Country names appear to identify particular geographical or geopolitical entities, yet their contextual interpretation varies considerably. Evans

(2009, pp. 3–4), for example, shows that *France* may denote a territory, a political state, a national rugby team or the electorate participating in a referendum. A country name therefore does more than identify an invariant referent: its interpretation emerges through co-text, encyclopaedic knowledge, the communicative situation and discourse perspective.

Frame Semantics treats lexical meaning as access to structured knowledge (Fillmore, 1982; Fillmore & Baker, 2010). In FrameNet[1], the nation-state sense of *country.n* belongs to Political_locales, which provides a baseline for construing a politically delimited locale (Boas et al., 2024). The frame does not explain every reading produced when *Britain* occurs with predicates of voting, governing, producing or recovering. Such contexts may metonymically profile a population, government, economy or another associated target. This referential question differs from metaphorical construal: in *Britain was hit by Donald Trump's tariffs* (The Economist, 2025), *Britain* accesses the affected economy, while *was hit* represents economic harm as physical impact.

The principal case study is the Economist article *Brand Britain has bounced back* (The Economist, 2025), with 40 occurrences of *Britain* in its title and article text. Its sustained discussion of domestic conditions, international position and reputation allows contextual shifts to be examined within a single discourse. The central expression, *Brand Britain*, relates the country to commercial branding and foregrounds its international image. Research on nation branding provides a useful context for this association while also questioning the extent to which commercial branding models can be applied to countries (Anholt, 1998; Fan, 2010).

The research problem was proposed by the author and initially explored, under his supervision, in Dominika Szczepanik's BA thesis *Country Names in Journalistic Discourse: Metonymic and Metaphorical Meaning Construction* (Szczepanik, 2026). The present paper offers an independent, substantially revised analysis. It distinguishes the documented Political_locales frame, the lexical unit *country.n*, its core frame element Locale and COUNTRY as an abstract label in metonymic and metaphorical formulations. It also systematically separates the target selected through a country name from the construal contributed by its predicate, modifier or construction.

The comparison draws on the *NOW* Corpus (Davies, 2016 – present), using its British-source category and a search for *Britain* immediately followed by a verbal form between 1 January 2025 and 28 August 2026. Of 199 accessible concordance lines, 134 were retained for qualitative analysis. This

[1] Berkeley FrameNet is an online lexical database based on Frame Semantics. It links words in particular senses to semantic frames (structured representations of situations or entities) and identifies their constituent roles and attributes, called frame elements (Boas et al., 2024).

structurally restricted sample makes the study corpus-informed rather than an exhaustive quantitative account.

It addresses three questions:

1. When does *Britain* denote a geographical or political locale or the nation-state as a whole (a holistic reading), and when does it provide access to a more specific metonymic target?
2. How do predicates, modifiers and constructions metaphorically construe the selected referent?
3. How do metonymy and metaphor interact, and do the case-study patterns recur in the *NOW* sample?

Section 2 presents the framework and Section 3 the method. Sections 4 – 5 analyse metonymic profiles and metaphorical construals, Section 6 examines *Brand Britain*, and Section 7 concludes.

2. Theoretical background

The framework combines contextual meaning construction, Frame Semantics, conceptual metonymy and metaphor, and constructional analysis. Together, they explain how discourse guides interpretation, frames organise relevant knowledge, metonymy provides access to associated targets, and metaphor and grammatical organisation contribute to their construal.

2.1. Context-dependent meaning construction

Following Evans (2009), a lexical form provides access to conceptual knowledge, but interpretation depends on linguistic and extralinguistic context. Country-name readings are therefore treated as contextual selections from structured knowledge rather than an arbitrary inventory of unrelated senses. Predicate meaning is especially informative: *Britain voted to leave the EU* (*NOW*, 31.07.26) selects referendum participants, whereas *Britain deployed its Carrier Strike Group* (*NOW*, 19.01.26) selects the government and armed forces. Wider discourse may refine the target or leave alternatives open, as with the economy, labour market and employers in *Britain needs 124k trained mechanics* (*NOW*, 24.02.25).

Predicate, arguments, modifiers and construction constrain the reading together. The surrounding discourse may identify an institution, process or viewpoint that the local clause leaves unspecified. Contextual breadth should not automatically be treated as deliberate ambiguity: a short concordance may simply provide insufficient evidence.

Referential profiling and metaphorical construal are analytically distinct. Locale-oriented, holistic and metonymic readings concern what *Britain* denotes or makes accessible; metaphor concerns the source structure through

which that target is understood. A human-compatible predicate does not alone establish personification: *Britain voted* can be explained by access to human voters. Conversely, identifying a metonymic target does not cancel a metaphor contributed by the predicate. The two dimensions may constrain each other during interpretation.

2.2. Frame Semantics and FrameNet

Frame Semantics holds that an expression is understood against a structured background of knowledge, or semantic frame (Fillmore, 1982; Fillmore & Atkins, 1992). A frame organises related participants, entities, properties and relations into frame elements. Berkeley FrameNet implements this approach as a lexical database, pairing lexical forms in frame-specific senses with frames and classifying their frame elements principally as core, peripheral or extra-thematic (Boas et al., 2024).

Core elements are central to a frame's defining structure; peripheral elements add such information as location, time or description, depending on the frame. A FrameNet lexical unit is a lexical form paired with a particular frame-specific sense, not simply an occurrence of a word or name.

FrameNet documents the relevant nation-state sense of *country.n* under Political_locales, rather than under a frame named *Country* (Berkeley FrameNet, n.d.). Its frame elements are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Frame elements associated with the Political_locales frame

Status	Frame element	Function
Core	Locale	The relatively stable, bounded and politically or administratively defined area
Peripheral	Constituent_parts	The constituent parts making up the locale
Peripheral	Container_possessor	The larger location of which the locale forms a part
Peripheral	Descriptor	A characteristic or property attributed to the locale
Peripheral	Name	The name assigned to the locale
Peripheral	Population	The people inhabiting the locale
Peripheral	Relative_location	A place in relation to which the locale is situated

The proper name *Britain* identifies an entity interpretable against this frame. It is described here as a country name or toponymic expression. This usage does not claim that it is a documented FrameNet lexical unit. Likewise, COUNTRY in COUNTRY FOR ITS GOVERNMENT denotes a general conceptual category rather than an official FrameNet frame.

The inventory does not encompass every entity associated with a country. Population provides a basis for access to inhabitants and contextually

delimited groups, whereas governments, economies, armed forces and national teams require associated conceptual knowledge. Descriptor accommodates properties attributed to a locale but does not identify their referential target or figurative motivation. Nor does its availability establish that every descriptive clause should be annotated as that frame element. This study uses FrameNet to clarify conceptual structure, supplemented by contextual analysis; it does not claim to provide a complete FrameNet annotation of the data.

2.3. Conceptual metonymy and place-name reference

Conceptual metonymy allows one entity, the vehicle, to provide mental access to a contiguous target within the same conceptual domain or frame (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). Unlike metaphor, it redirects attention between closely associated entities rather than establishing a cross-domain correspondence.

Country names are productive vehicles because knowledge about a country connects its territory with its population, institutions, economy, activities and reputation. Corpus research on proper names demonstrates recurring metonymic patterns alongside mixed and contextually uncertain readings (Markert & Nissim, 2006). Here, COUNTRY FOR ITS NATION refers specifically to access to the national community and thus instantiates the higher-level metonymy PLACE FOR INHABITANTS. It is not used interchangeably with every holistic nation-state reading.

More specific formulations are related to three higher-level patterns. For example, COUNTRY FOR ITS ELECTORATE instantiates PLACE FOR INHABITANTS; COUNTRY FOR ITS GOVERNMENT instantiates PLACE FOR INSTITUTION; and COUNTRY FOR ECONOMIC or DIPLOMATIC PROCESSES instantiates PLACE FOR EVENT. EVENT is used broadly to include activities and extended processes, including their interruption or absence. Institutional and processual aspects may overlap, but an event predicate alone does not establish PLACE FOR EVENT: its participant may instead be an institution performing the activity.

The analysis distinguishes direct locale reference, holistic nation-state readings, specific metonymic readings, and mixed or indeterminate cases. A holistic reading profiles the integrated polity without isolating one constituent institution or population group. It may be compatible with a broad territory-to-polity access relation, but does not by itself justify a narrower target label. Metaphorical construal is assessed across all four categories.

2.4. Conceptual metaphor: domains and frames

A conceptual metaphor is a unidirectional, asymmetric mapping that projects selected structure from a source domain onto a target and estab-

lishes correspondences between their elements (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014, pp. 13 – 16). Domains are connected areas of knowledge of variable scope. Frames specify organised roles and relations within such knowledge. Frames themselves vary in schematicity, so the distinction is not an absolute opposition between large domains and small frames. Frame-level analysis nevertheless helps identify which structure an expression selects for projection (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014, pp. 17 – 20; Sullivan, 2013).

Mapping labels must reflect both the attested wording and its context. POLITICAL ENTITIES ARE PERSONS connects a family of expressions, whereas ECONOMIC DECLINE IS ILLNESS identifies a narrower target. Not all source properties are projected, and not every concrete expression supports the same level of elaboration: spatial motion, for example, need not evoke a complete journey.

In the description *the sick man of Europe* (The Economist, 2025), the bodily construal can be specified through FrameNet's People and Medical_conditions frames. The polity or economy corresponds to the Patient, while its national difficulties correspond to the Ailment. These are analytical correspondences between source and target, not additional elements of Political_locales. Documented FrameNet names are distinguished throughout from broader conceptual labels, such as a journey schema or a commercial-branding frame.

2.5. Metaphor – metonymy interaction

Metonymy and metaphor may jointly determine meaning. Following Goossens (1990), *metaphtonymy* is used here in a broad operational sense for cases where metonymic access and metaphorical construal make distinguishable but interdependent contributions. This usage does not require every case to instantiate one of Goossens's original subtypes.

In the Economist's *sick man of Europe* passage, industrial unrest, interest rates and economic decline foreground Britain's economy and economic processes, while *diplomatic impotence* foregrounds ineffective diplomatic activity. These associations support COUNTRY FOR ITS ECONOMY and COUNTRY FOR DIPLOMACY, with process-focused readings related to PLACE FOR EVENT. The polity is construed as an afflicted person and its economic and diplomatic condition as illness or bodily incapacity. The interpretation can be schematised as:

BRITAIN / COUNTRY → POLITY WITH ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC DIFFICULTIES → PERSON SUFFERING ILLNESS AND INCAPACITY

The arrows trace analytical access and construal, not a temporal processing sequence or the direction of metaphorical projection. Projection runs from the bodily source onto the national target: person corresponds to

polity, and illness to national difficulty. The co-text makes a purely territorial interpretation inadequate. Descriptor can accommodate attributed properties, but cannot itself select these targets, establish metonymy or make the description metaphorical.

2.6. The compound schema and *Brand Britain*

Constructional organisation also contributes to meaning. Following Bierwiaczonek (2013), the predominant English compound pattern is represented as XY: X modifier + Y head. The present analysis treats *Brand Britain* as a left-headed YX compound, with *Brand* as head and *Britain* as postmodifier. It profiles a brand associated with Britain, approximately 'Britain's brand'. The article's alternation between these formulations supports this analysis, which is developed in Section 6.

The construction establishes a relation between the profiled brand and the country. It does not automatically make the name stand for reputation or determine which features of commercial branding are relevant. Those interpretations depend on the discourse in which the expression occurs.

3. Data and analytical procedure

3.1. Data selection

The primary dataset comprises 40 occurrences of *Britain* in the title and article text of *Brand Britain has bounced back* (The Economist, 2025), examined in their full discourse context. The supplied copy contains 41 occurrences in total; one belongs to a newsletter promotion and is excluded. The count includes genitives, *Brand Britain* and the hyphenated expression *Britain-bashing*. These constructions were retained because they contribute to the article's discussion of domestic conditions, international position and reputation. The selection provides a sustained qualitative case study, not a representative sample of Economist reporting.

The comparative data were obtained from the *NOW* Corpus (Davies, 2016 – present), using its GB source category, the period 1 January 2025 – 28 August 2026 and a query for *Britain* immediately followed by a verbal form. The supplied export is numbered 1 – 200 but contains 199 accessible lines: line 66 is absent. All accessible lines were screened, and 134 were retained. These contain referential uses in which *Britain*, alone or within a population-denoting partitive such as *the majority of Britain*, identifies a participant in the following predication. The missing line belongs to neither the retained nor the excluded total.

The 65 exclusions comprise 38 lines in which the following verbal form is not predicated of a participant identified by *Britain*, 23 fixed multiword proper names in which the name does not function independently, two part-of-speech false positives and two corrupt or contextually insufficient fragments. For example, line 131 has *the actions of the United States and Britain send*: the subject of *send* is *the actions*, so this is excluded from the selected argument-predicate pattern. The references below reproduce the dates recorded in the export, using the day.month.year format. These are corpus source dates, not dates assigned to the events described. Tokenisation spacing is normalised in quotations, and omissions are marked.

The export does not establish random selection, and the query captures only one structural pattern. The sample is therefore used to examine recurrence in online journalistic usage, not to estimate the frequency of interpretations in British journalism generally. Repeated formulations and limited concordance context also constrain what can be inferred from the sample.

3.2. Analytical procedure

Each occurrence was examined manually in its available context. Four referential possibilities were distinguished: a locale-oriented reading; a holistic nation-state or polity reading; a specific metonymic reading; and a mixed or indeterminate reading. A mixed reading positively supports several aspects, whereas an indeterminate reading leaves alternatives unresolved. Predicate meaning and argument structure provide the principal local evidence, supplemented by modifiers, complements, grammatical constructions and wider discourse.

Targets were labelled at the most specific supported level, including COUNTRY FOR ITS ELECTORATE, COUNTRY FOR ITS GOVERNMENT, COUNTRY FOR ITS ECONOMY, COUNTRY FOR DIPLOMACY, COUNTRY FOR ITS TEAM and COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION. These were related, where appropriate, to PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, PLACE FOR INSTITUTION and PLACE FOR EVENT. The last encompasses economic, political and diplomatic activities and extended processes. The analysis distinguishes an entity accessed through the name from the activity or condition foregrounded by its predicate: in *Britain entered recession*, for example, the economy undergoes the change, while recession specifies its new state. A process-focused account does not turn the process itself into an agent.

Referential profiling and metaphorical construal were assessed in relation to one another. For metaphor, the contextual sense of an expression was compared with the more intersubjectively accessible source structure it could evoke, and the proposed correspondences were checked against the wording and co-text. A human-compatible verb or an abstract target was insufficient on its own. *Britain voted* permits literal voting by metonymically

accessed people; *Britain was hit by Donald Trump's tariffs* combines an economic target with physical-impact structure. Conventional expressions were neither automatically classed as metaphorical nor excluded merely because they were familiar. Mapping labels reflect the specificity of the evidence, with broader formulations connecting related cases.

FrameNet was used to clarify relevant structures, with official frame names kept distinct from analyst-defined conceptual labels. Associated institutions and processes were not added to the Political_locales inventory. Descriptor was treated as a possible descriptive role, not as a diagnostic of metonymy or metaphor. The analysis is qualitative and interpretive. It does not report a formal metaphor-identification protocol or an intercoder reliability estimate.

Where target access and metaphorical construal depended on one another, the interpretation was analysed as metaphtonymic. *Brand Britain* additionally received a constructional analysis, tested against the article's paraphrases and reputational discourse. Patterns in the case study were then compared with *NOW* examples, retaining borderline and counterexamples. Sections 4 and 5 separate referential and source-structure questions for exposition. This ordering makes no claim that interpretation proceeds through fixed stages.

4. Metonymic profiles of *Britain*

The following analysis identifies the contextual profiles of *Britain*, from locale and holistic national readings to inhabitants, institutions, processes, reputation and unresolved combinations. Predicate frames help identify participants, but their role requirements do not themselves establish metaphor. A voting predicate can select voters metonymically without personifying a territory. Source structures are discussed here only where they help distinguish targets; Section 5 develops their metaphorical contribution.

4.1. Locale-oriented and holistic national readings

Some occurrences directly profile the geographical or political locale. In *Britain is home to three of the world's top ten universities* (The Economist, 2025), *Britain* identifies where the institutions are situated. The conventional expression *be home to* extends a residential relation to an institutional location and admits a HOME / RESIDENCE construal. That figurative contribution belongs to the predication; it does not require the country name to stand for the universities or another associated entity.

Other occurrences assess Britain as an integrated nation-state. In *Great Britain possesses one of the most secure electricity systems globally* (*NOW*,

11.01.26), the infrastructure is presented as a national property; isolating the government or one operator would be unnecessarily narrow. The holistic polity may also occupy a metaphorical role, as in *Britain stands at a fork in the road* (*NOW*, 30.09.25). Here, Britain is construed as a traveller facing alternatives. This construal draws on bodily experience of standing, orienting oneself and choosing a route through physical space. Although the metaphorical traveller role is identifiable, the supplied context does not establish a more specific institutional referent for *Britain*.

Holistic reference therefore differs from specifically identifying a government, electorate or economy. It does not imply that the predication is literal, nor exclude a broad territory-to-polity relation. The distinction records how specifically the available context supports referential selection.

4.2. PLACE FOR INHABITANTS: population, electorate and workforce

PLACE FOR INHABITANTS applies when *Britain* accesses people associated with the country. COUNTRY FOR ITS POPULATION or COUNTRY FOR ITS NATION identifies a broad national community; narrower predicates may select the electorate, travellers or workforce. FrameNet's Population element provides a conceptual basis for this access, although these functional subsets are not separate elements of Political_locales.

In *The majority of Britain wants a wealth tax* (*NOW*, 05.09.25), the partitive construction and volitional predicate select members of the population. *Britain wants to fly* (*NOW*, 02.12.25) is restricted by airport and airline references to prospective travellers, while *Britain sweats through its third heatwave* (*NOW*, 15.08.25) accesses affected inhabitants. Wanting and sweating apply literally to these human targets; personification of the country is unnecessary to explain these predications. The latter two examples may also carry a hyperbolic effect by suggesting that the desires or experiences of particular groups are shared by the population as a whole.

In *Britain voted to leave the EU* (*NOW*, 31.07.26), the electoral frame selects referendum participants: COUNTRY FOR ITS ELECTORATE instantiates PLACE FOR INHABITANTS. The collective formulation presents an aggregate outcome without implying that every inhabitant or voter supported leaving. More generally, PLACE FOR INHABITANTS may acquire a hyperbolic effect when the views or actions of a subgroup are presented as shared by the population as a whole.

Get Britain working again (*NOW*, 17.01.25 and 14.04.26) may similarly access the workforce where the context concerns employment. Here *working* can retain its literal employment sense. Contexts combining welfare, employment and economic recovery may also keep the workforce and economy jointly prominent. By contrast, in *Britain needs 124k trained mechanics* (*NOW*, 24.02.25), employers, the labour market and economy bear the re-

quirement; the mechanics are those required. A labour-related topic therefore does not by itself identify the workforce as the name's target.

4.3. PLACE FOR INSTITUTION: government and national representatives

PLACE FOR INSTITUTION applies when *Britain* accesses an organised body or people acting in an authorised national capacity. Its specifications include COUNTRY FOR ITS GOVERNMENT and COUNTRY FOR ITS REPRESENTATIVES, encompassing diplomats, negotiators and military personnel. Their institutional role, rather than merely their residence in Britain, motivates this classification.

In *Britain has quietly rebuilt some of the diplomatic influence it squandered* and *Britain has pulled out all the stops … to flatter Mr Trump* (The Economist, 2025), the discussion of political leaders, negotiations and state diplomacy identifies the government and diplomatic apparatus. These actors are accessed metonymically. Section 5.4 examines the source structure in *rebuilt* and *squandered*. Institutional predication can also be non-metaphorical: *Britain agreed to the principle of a youth mobility scheme* (*NOW*, 20.05.25) accesses governmental negotiators, and *Britain abstained* (*NOW*, 13.08.25) identifies an authorised representative or delegation.

Military examples reveal different levels of specificity. *Britain deployed its Carrier Strike Group* (*NOW*, 19.01.26) accesses the government and armed forces. In *Britain, Italy and Japan are co-developing the 'Tempest'* (The Economist, 2025), COUNTRY FOR ITS DEFENCE ESTABLISHMENT accommodates the distributed responsibility of authorities, organisations and technical teams. A more explicit access chain is COUNTRY → GOVERNMENT / DEFENCE AUTHORITIES → IMPLEMENTING DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS AND TECHNICAL TEAMS. The first relation instantiates PLACE FOR INSTITUTION. If commissioning authorities stand for the bodies carrying out development, the more specific GOVERNMENT FOR IMPLEMENTING DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS AND TECHNICAL TEAMS instantiates CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED. This is a possible elaboration of institutional access, not a claim about successive processing stages or an obligatory chain in every reading.

National representation also occurs in sport. In *Great Britain won a record-equalling 10 medals* (*NOW*, 12.09.25), COUNTRY FOR ITS TEAM or COUNTRY FOR ITS SPORTING REPRESENTATIVES identifies the competitors who literally won the medals. This is grouped under institutional representation because the athletes compete on the country's behalf. It is not classified as PLACE FOR EVENT merely because winning occurs within a sporting event.

4.4. PLACE FOR EVENT: economic, political and diplomatic processes

PLACE FOR EVENT captures readings that foreground activities and extended processes associated with Britain, including their interruption or absence. It provides a schematic account of COUNTRY FOR ECONOMIC PROCESSES, COUNTRY FOR POLITICAL PROCESSES and COUNTRY FOR DIPLOMATIC PROCESSES. Such processual prominence can coexist with access to the economy, polity or institution undergoing or carrying out the activity. The distinction concerns what the discourse foregrounds, not a claim that the country name always substitutes for an event noun.

COUNTRY FOR ITS ECONOMY may accordingly relate to PLACE FOR INSTITUTION when an organised economic or financial system is prominent, and to PLACE FOR EVENT when economic activity or development is foregrounded. Conditions such as recession are understood in relation to those processes. Similarly, diplomacy may be viewed through its institutional participants or through their activity, influence and effectiveness. The predicate and co-text must support the distinction; an economic or diplomatic topic alone is insufficient.

In the Economist's opening passage, industrial unrest, interest rates and economic decline foreground economic activity and performance, while *diplomatic impotence* foregrounds ineffective diplomatic action. The country name gives access to these aspects of national condition, which the illness and incapacity expressions integrate. COUNTRY FOR ITS ECONOMY and COUNTRY FOR DIPLOMACY therefore have process-focused specifications here, while the polity remains the entity whose condition is assessed.

In *Britain entered recession* (*NOW*, 26.01.25), *Britain* accesses the economy and the predicate foregrounds a transition in its condition. The following coordinated wording, *and, at one point, worked a three-day week*, shifts attention towards working arrangements and the workforce. One grammatical subject thus supports related economic and human profiles. Likewise, *get Britain growing again* (*NOW*, 13.12.25) foregrounds renewed economic activity in a labour-market context. Their motion and growth construals are developed in Sections 5.2 and 5.4.

Political development is explicit in *In the 1980s Britain took some wrong turns. Political power was centralised* (*NOW*, 20.07.26). The second sentence identifies changes in political organisation as the aspect being evaluated. COUNTRY FOR POLITICAL PROCESSES captures that prominence, while the polity and its decision-makers remain relevant to the implied agency. In *Britain played a 'key role' in bringing about peace* (*NOW*, 13.10.25), diplomatic activity is salient, but the local participant requirement primarily selects authorised actors. A simultaneous process-focused account is possible; the event complement alone does not establish a second metonymic shift.

The contrast with *'undervalued' Britain* (The Economist, 2025) clarifies the limits of PLACE FOR EVENT. The immediate discussion of equities, investors and market value identifies the British financial market or its assets. Valuation is attributed to these targets, rather than to an economic process merely because finance is the topic. The most precise label is COUNTRY FOR ITS FINANCIAL MARKET OR ASSETS, related to institutional access where the market as an organised system is foregrounded.

4.5. COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION

COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION accesses public image, international standing or perceived attractiveness. Reputation consists of representations and evaluations held by an audience. Its identification therefore depends on evidence about image, observers, surveys or rankings, not on evaluation alone. Descriptor can accommodate evaluative properties but does not select reputation as their target.

The Economist article first states the association in *Britain's reputation*. The head noun explicitly profiles reputation, while *Britain* supplies the national reference point. This relational access is metonymically motivated in the broad sense adopted here, but differs from the name alone standing for an unexpressed target. The article also reports that almost half of Britons say that *Britain is perceived negatively by the rest of the world*. In that embedded claim, the perceiver and evaluation foreground Britain's image. Crucially, this reports domestic beliefs about foreign opinion. The subsequent international surveys introduce more favourable external assessments.

In *Britain's international stock is in fact rising* (The Economist, 2025), the genitive again provides a reference point and *stock* metaphorically profiles reputational value. A related, narrower reading occurs in *Britain continues to decline from its 2017 position* (*NOW*, 24.02.26). The co-text names the Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures perceived public-sector corruption (Transparency International, 2026). The target is consequently Britain's assessed institutional integrity and index standing. This can be treated as a specific reputational dimension, but the index does not measure the country's public image in every respect. The spatial construal of these assessments is examined in Section 5.2.

Other evaluations have different targets: *'undervalued' Britain* foregrounds the financial market or assets, while *home to* leading universities identifies a location even though the claim contributes positively to national image. *Brand Britain* also requires contextual evidence. The article's explicit equation of nation-brand with global reputation supports a reputational interpretation, whose constructional and metaphorical dimensions are examined in Section 6.

4.6. Mixed and indeterminate readings

A mixed reading positively supports several simultaneously relevant aspects; an indeterminate reading leaves alternatives unresolved because the evidence is insufficient. Both differ from holistic reference to the integrated nation-state without a requirement to isolate a component. These distinctions describe the available interpretive evidence rather than sharply bounded types of national entity.

In *What has happened to Britain?* (The Economist, 2025), the surrounding discussion makes a purely territorial reading inadequate and combines economic decline, political weakness, diplomatic incapacity and concern about reputation. The occurrence can therefore be read as mixed: several aspects contribute to the diagnosis. The question in isolation would also permit a holistic reading, but its elaboration supplies positive evidence for multiple national concerns.

Other cases remain less determinate. *Britain needs 124k trained mechanics* (*NOW*, 24.02.25) permits the economy, labour market and employers as bearers of the requirement without clearly choosing among them. *Need* expresses a requirement and does not itself establish personification. In employment-and-growth uses of *get Britain working again*, by contrast, human employment and economic operation may both be supported. The distinction between these readings depends on the concordance, not on the repeated wording alone.

In *Could Britain see a snap election before 2029?* (*NOW*, 14.11.25), the country name may access inhabitants as experiencers or the polity within which the election would occur. *See* conventionally presents event occurrence as experience or observation. Under a holistic interpretation it can lend the polity an experiential perspective; access to human experiencers offers another account. The wording does not establish cognition through vision merely because it contains *see*, since the relevant meaning concerns an event's occurrence rather than understanding it.

Mixed and indeterminate readings thus preserve distinctions that a single narrow target would obscure. They also mark the limits of interpretation from short concordances. Their inclusion prevents the classification from presenting more precision than the evidence supports.

5. Metaphorical construals of *Britain*

Section 4 distinguished the contextual profiles of *Britain*. This section examines the source structures through which those profiles are construed. Human-compatible predicates can apply literally to accessed voters, officials or athletes, whereas a holistic polity or a specifically accessed target may be

metaphorically elaborated. The examples are grouped by their principal source structures, with broader labels connecting more specific mappings. Repeated examples are used only where they reveal a different analytical contribution.

5.1. Personification, illness and bodily incapacity

The Economist's *sick man of Europe* passage combines several bodily mappings. POLITICAL ENTITIES ARE PERSONS assigns the polity an embodied identity; NATIONAL DECLINE IS ILLNESS organises its adverse condition, with ECONOMIC DECLINE IS ILLNESS specifying the economic component. *Crippled* represents reduced capacity as physical disability, while *diplomatic impotence* construes ineffective diplomacy through bodily incapacity. Their combination turns several national difficulties into one diagnosis. The point is not that every noun in *industrial unrest, sky-high interest rates, economic decline and diplomatic impotence* is metaphorical in the same way: the illness predicates organise the list, while *sky-high* and *impotence* supply their own source structure.

Related construals recur in *Britain seems unsure of its moral inheritance and politically febrile* (*NOW*, 02.03.26). On the holistic reading supported by this broad cultural assessment, *unsure* gives the polity a mental perspective; *politically febrile* construes political agitation as fever; and *moral inheritance* represents inherited cultural values through possession and transmission. POLITICAL ENTITIES ARE PERSONS thus combines with POLITICAL AGITATION IS FEVER and CULTURAL TRADITION IS AN INHERITED POSSESSION. A population-oriented interpretation remains possible, particularly for the attitude expressed by *unsure*.

Embodiment need not always be specifically human. In *Britain sits on nearly a trillion pounds of ISA savings* (*NOW*, 20.11.25), the country name accesses savers and the financial system, while *sits on* presents resources as held beneath an inactive possessor. This posture-based construal emphasises their non-use. The wording *the trade-offs Britain needs to survive* (*NOW*, 09.08.26) permits an organism-based construal of national continuity. Survival belongs to living beings more generally, however, and does not alone establish a specifically human source.

Cognitive predicates likewise require contextual discrimination. *Britain realised it needed to follow suit* (*NOW*, 24.01.25) permits access to national decision-makers, to whom *realised* can apply literally. The short concordance does not conclusively identify one institution. Personification is warranted where the polity itself is assigned a human perspective or bodily role, rather than inferred automatically from grammatical subjecthood or a predicate compatible with human agents.

5.2. States, change and political journeys

Many expressions spatialise political, economic or reputational conditions. They draw schematically on the Event Structure Metaphor, particularly STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE IS MOTION (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014). Some draw on the journey source domain, which includes a traveller, routes, choices and destinations. Here, journey is an analytical source label, not the name of an official FrameNet frame. Contextual evidence is needed to distinguish schematic metaphorical movement from this fuller journey construal.

In *Britain entered recession* (*NOW*, 26.01.25), *Britain* accesses the national economy and foregrounds its changing condition. The economy is reified as a moving entity, recession as a bounded location, and transition into recession as crossing its boundary. COUNTRY FOR ITS ECONOMY, with the process-focused interpretation discussed in Section 4.4, combines with STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE IS MOTION. The abstract economy acquires a concrete spatial structure without necessarily becoming a person: entities other than humans can enter locations.

Britain continues to decline from its 2017 position (*NOW*, 24.02.26) instead foregrounds assessed institutional integrity and index standing. *Position* represents that standing as a location and *decline* its deterioration as downward motion. STATES ARE LOCATIONS and CHANGE IS MOTION interact with HIGH STATUS IS UP / LOW STATUS IS DOWN, which are specific cases of the superordinate Up and Down schemas. Similarly, *Britain's international stock is in fact rising* (The Economist, 2025) combines REPUTATION IS A FINANCIAL ASSET with IMPROVEMENT IS UP. Both spatialise changing evaluation and neither requires a complete journey.

The fuller conceptual domain is evident in *Britain stands at a fork in the road* (*NOW*, 30.09.25). The holistic polity occupies the embodied role of a traveller, motivating POLITICAL ENTITIES ARE TRAVELLERS and POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY. The fork instantiates CHOICES ARE CROSSROADS: alternative paths represent courses of action, which lead towards different outcomes. *Stands* situates the traveller at the decision point. The personifying construal arises from this combined scenario, not from the verb alone; the available context does not select one narrower institutional target.

The journey becomes retrospective in *In the 1980s Britain took some wrong turns. Political power was centralised* (*NOW*, 20.07.26). The second sentence identifies political organisation as the relevant target aspect. Britain occupies the traveller role, while its course of political development corresponds to the journey. Decisions are turns, and *wrong* evaluates them against a preferable route or outcome. CHANGE IS MOTION is therefore elaborated as POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IS A JOURNEY, with responsibility attributable more specifically to political decision-makers where the context permits.

Directional change appears in *Britain pivots towards a future that privileges sectors such as tech* (*NOW*, 08.01.25). *Pivots* construes policy and economic change as reorientation, while *towards a future* makes a projected state a destination. In *the electrical equipment Britain needs as it moves towards 'cleaner' energy* (*NOW*, 08.09.25), the pronoun *it* resumes *Britain* and the energy transition is movement towards a projected state. Both support the CHANGE IS MOTION mapping. PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS further applies insofar as those states are presented as policy goals. Their journeys are less elaborated than the crossroads and wrong-turns examples.

A motion verb does not alone establish a journey. In *Is Britain turning into Trump's America?* (*NOW*, 24.09.25), *turn into* presents a possible change in political character as transformation. POLITICAL CHANGE IS A CHANGE OF FORM captures that construal at a schematic level and no literal bodily shape is specified. The construction does not supply a traveller following a route, and its conventional change-of-state meaning offers weaker evidence for a concrete physical source than *fork in the road*. The analogy with *Trump's America* provides much of the question's evaluative content.

The examples thus distinguish reification as a moving entity, change of state, directional reorientation and an elaborated political journey. Mapping specificity follows the source structure supported by the expression and its context, rather than the mere presence of a motion verb.

5.3. Confrontation, impact and constraint

Political and economic difficulties are also construed through physical interaction and restricted movement. Harm becomes impact, threats become confronting entities, vulnerability becomes exposure, and dependence becomes confinement. These related structures select different properties and should not be collapsed into one mapping.

In *Britain was hit by Donald Trump's tariffs* (The Economist, 2025), the country name accesses the affected economy, businesses and trade. The passive construction casts that target as struck by an external force, instantiating ECONOMIC HARM IS PHYSICAL IMPACT. This reifies economic activity as physically affected but need not personify it: both animate beings and objects can be struck.

Face combines with different targets: *Britain faces a damaging cliff edge* (*NOW*, 17.10.25), *Britain faces its biggest security threat in decades* (*NOW*, 10.06.26), and *Britain faces an energy storage crunch* (*NOW*, 05.08.25). The co-text foregrounds, respectively, national policy consequences, security and defence, and the energy system. Bodily orientation structures confrontation with a difficulty or threat. *Cliff edge* adds dangerous terrain, while *crunch* presents shortage and pressure through compression. The repeated

predicate supplies a related source construal without imposing one uniform referential target.

In *would keep Britain locked in dependence on global markets we don't control* (*NOW*, 20.04.25), the economy's market relations are represented through DEPENDENCE IS CONFINEMENT and STATES ARE LOCATIONS, with dependence construed as a bounded space. Inability to alter the relationship becomes inability to leave. In *seeing Britain escape the quagmire of the 1970s* (*NOW*, 11.10.25), persistent political and economic difficulties become obstructive terrain, instantiating DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION, while improvement becomes escape. The blocked exit and obstructive terrain both constrain metaphorical movement; entrapment and escape remain more central than a fully elaborated journey.

A related limitation on control appears in *Britain remains exposed to the rollercoaster of global fossil fuel …* (*NOW*, 04.04.26). *Britain* provides metonymic access to the national economy in its dependence on global fossil fuel markets. *Exposed* construes economic vulnerability as lack of physical protection, while *rollercoaster* represents market fluctuations as abrupt rises and falls during a ride whose movement passengers cannot control. The passage thus combines ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY IS PHYSICAL EXPOSURE with MARKET VOLATILITY IS A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE.

Finally, *Britain continues to 'roll over to the French …'* (*NOW*, 24.06.26) accesses the government and construes concession through bodily submission. This source may evoke yielding human or animal behaviour. It need not be classified as exclusively human personification. Across the examples, metonymic access identifies the relevant national actor or affected system, while the predicate specifies impact, confrontation, confinement, exposure or submission.

5.4. Functioning, growth and prosperity

A final cluster construes national capacity through restoration, functioning, growth, energy and strength. These expressions are not interchangeable, and positive evaluation alone does not establish a shared metaphor.

In *Britain has quietly rebuilt some of the diplomatic influence it squandered* (The Economist, 2025), *Britain* accesses the government and diplomatic apparatus. *Rebuilt* presents restored influence as a reconstructed structure, while *squandered* treats influence as a valuable resource that was wastefully expended. The expression combines RECOVERING DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE IS REBUILDING A STRUCTURE and DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE. The article's emphasis on renewed effectiveness makes restoration, rather than simple possession, central to the construal.

The workforce and economy ambiguity of *get Britain working* was established in Section 4.2. Its source structure must be assessed locally. In *fixing*

the broken welfare system we inherited in order to get Britain working (*NOW*, 02.02.26), *fixing* and *broken* clearly construe welfare organisation through malfunction and repair. They do not force *working* itself to be metaphorical: the purpose clause may still concern people entering employment. If it assesses economic or institutional operation more broadly, a functioning-system construal is also available. The same passage can therefore combine metaphorical institutional repair with literal work by a metonymically accessed population.

In *repair our broken labour market and get Britain growing again* (*NOW*, 13.12.25), the repair construal accompanies economic expansion. *Growing* supports ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS ORGANIC GROWTH at a schematic level, while *again* presents renewed development. The wording does not specify a plant, body or particular biological mechanism, so a more detailed organic mapping would exceed the evidence. The passage combines restoration of a functioning labour system with expansion of economic activity.

Other expressions select different aspects of capacity. *The kind of energy Britain needs now; less copy and paste and more innovate and deliver* (*NOW*, 16.10.25) uses *energy* for dynamism and innovative effort. *A stronger Britain means a stronger Nato* (*NOW*, 02.07.26) connects physical strength with political and military capacity. By contrast, in *an economic strategy that helps Britain prosper* (*NOW*, 09.05.26), *prosper* denotes economic or material success without supplying clear evidence for organic growth. These contrasts favour specific, contextually supported mappings over a general classification of all favourable economic predicates as metaphorical.

Restoration, operation, growth, energy and strength consequently illuminate different aspects of national capacity. The article's title uses a further recovery construal, physical rebound, whose relation to the national-brand expression is considered next.

6. *Brand Britain*: compound construction and metaphtonymy

Brand Britain brings together constructional organisation, metonymic access and metaphorical construal. The analysis must distinguish what the constituent relation contributes from the reputational interpretation supported by the Economist article.

Under the YX analysis introduced in Section 2.6, *Brand* is the left-hand head and *Britain* the postmodifier: the expression profiles a brand associated with Britain. The article alternates it with *Britain's 'brand'*, supporting the paraphrase 'Britain's brand'. This is evidence for the proposed headed analysis, rather than proof that the construction has only one possible gram-

matical treatment. The possessive paraphrase makes the conceptual relation explicit without making *Britain* the syntactic head.

At the minimal relational level, the country name identifies whose brand is discussed. The article then characterises a nation-brand as 'a proxy for global reputation' (The Economist, 2025, para. 5), directing attention to image, attractiveness and standing. COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION captures access from the broader country representation to this associated property. As with *Britain's reputation*, this is metonymic motivation within a larger expression. It need not entail that the isolated proper name has independently replaced an unexpressed noun meaning 'reputation'.

Brand provides commercial source structure for NATIONAL REPUTATION IS A COMMERCIAL BRAND. The article's evaluations support selective correspondences: brand identity relates to projected national identity; brand strength or value to international standing and attractiveness; and audiences and markets to foreign publics, investors, businesses, students and tourists. Diplomacy and cultural projection can serve promotional functions, while brand rankings organise comparative reputational assessment. These are analytical correspondences licensed to different degrees by the discourse, not an assertion that every feature of a commercial transaction is projected.

COUNTRY IS A BRAND captures the expression's compressed effect, but the more specific mapping identifies reputation as the principal target. *Brand* in the sense of public image is conventional; nevertheless, recurrent references to brand strength, rankings, attractiveness and influence elaborate its commercial associations. The contrast between domestic pessimism and favourable international assessments makes audience evaluation central to the article's argument.

The relationship can be represented as an analytical access path:

BRITAIN / COUNTRY → BRITAIN'S REPUTATION → COMMERCIAL BRAND

The first relation is metonymic and provides access to an associated property. The second identifies the metaphorical source through which that property is construed. As in Section 2.5, the arrows indicate analytical dependency rather than the direction of metaphorical projection, which proceeds from commercial branding to national reputation. This constitutes a metaphtonymic configuration under the study's broad operational definition: metonymic access to Britain's reputation and its metaphorical construal as a commercial brand contribute interdependently to meaning. This interpretation is licensed by the article's discourse context and is not automatically encoded in every *Brand + country name* expression.

The title *Brand Britain has bounced back* adds a predicate-level metaphor. Under the headed analysis, *bounced back* is predicated of the national

brand and thus, contextually, its reputation. A concrete object rebounds after displacement or impact and improvement in standing is correspondingly construed as physical rebound, while *back* marks recovery towards an earlier favourable condition. REPUTATIONAL RECOVERY IS PHYSICAL REBOUND instantiates RECOVERY IS RETURN MOTION, which is itself a more specific realisation of the schematic CHANGE IS MOTION mapping. The wording implies recovery, not necessarily a return to an identical measured level.

This construal reifies reputation as a displaced and returning entity without requiring personification. It also condenses the article's contrast between the historical *sick man of Europe* image and favourable contemporary assessments. The title thus integrates a brand – country relation, contextual access to reputation, commercial-branding structure and a recovery predicate. These contributions are distinguishable even though the reader interprets them together.

7. Conclusion

The interpretation of *Britain* depends on predicate, construction and discourse. The name can identify a political locale, profile the nation-state holistically or provide access to inhabitants, institutions, economic and diplomatic processes, competitors and reputation. Political_locales supplies a territorial-political baseline, but its frame elements do not constitute an ontology of everything associated with a country. The apparent stability of the country name therefore coexists with substantial flexibility in the aspects of national life that it brings into focus.

Referential profiling differs from metaphorical construal. Human-compatible predicates may apply non-metaphorically to accessed voters, officials or athletes, whereas other predications construe their targets metaphorically through source structures involving illness, motion, impact, constraint, functioning or growth. Metaphtonymy describes the interdependence of target access and source-based construal. These choices matter for the representation of collective agency and experience: a single national label can foreground shared actions or experiences while leaving particular actors, affected groups or differences within the population unspecified.

In *Brand Britain*, the proposed YX organisation profiles a brand associated with the country. Reputational discourse supports COUNTRY FOR ITS REPUTATION, commercial structure motivates NATIONAL REPUTATION IS A COMMERCIAL BRAND, and *bounced back* construes reputational recovery as physical rebound. The title thus condenses an assessment of national reputation into a compact expression whose meaning depends on the interaction of reference, grammatical organisation and figurative structure.

The *NOW* examples illustrate recurrence beyond the case study while retaining mixed and indeterminate readings. These qualitative findings from one article and a restricted corpus sample show how reference, frame knowledge, construction and figurative construal jointly shape interpretation. Further comparison across country names, genres and languages could establish which patterns recur widely and which depend on particular cultural associations or communicative settings. Research on reader interpretation could also examine how audiences resolve referential ambiguity and whether different metaphorical construals influence their evaluations of a country.

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