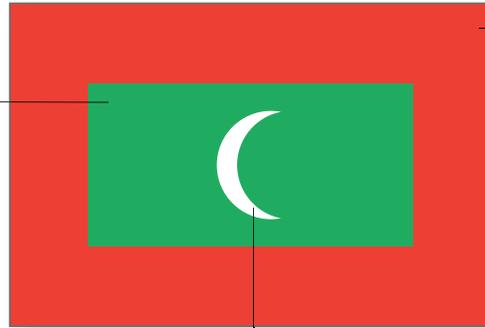


# Maldives

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** July 26, 1965 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The panel of Islamic green symbolizes peace and prosperity*



*Red was the original color of the Maldives flag*

*The crescent represents Islam*

Asia



The archipelago of small islands that forms the **Maldives** was once a British Protectorate. The Maldives became fully independent in 1965.

Until the beginning of the 20th century the flag of the Maldives was plain red, reflecting the culture of the Arab traders from the Persian Gulf who operated among the islands. This flag remained in use after the British Protectorate was set up in 1887. The flag later acquired a white crescent facing the hoist—another sign of Islamic influence.

## A NEW DESIGN

The flag was redesigned in 1948 after the independence of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) of which the islands had been a dependency. The crescent was turned around and placed on an Islamic green panel. A pattern of black and white diagonal stripes was

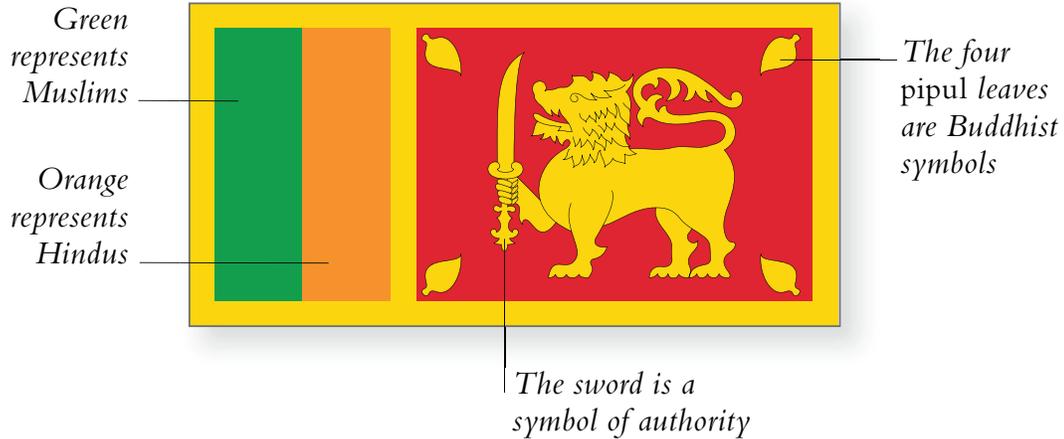
added along the hoist. This was dropped after independence from Britain in 1965. A modern interpretation of the colors suggests that red symbolizes the blood shed in the struggle for independence, while green stands for peace and progress.

## THE NATIONAL ARMS

The coat of arms of the Maldives contains the Islamic crescent and star emblem beneath a date palm. Below the crescent is a scroll with the inscription, in Dihevi, “State of a Thousand Islands,” which recalls the many islands—over 2000—that make up the Maldives. The crescent is flanked by two national flags.

# Sri Lanka

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** December 17, 1978 **Usage:** National and Civil



Asia



The island of Ceylon was a British colony until independence in 1948. It became a republic under the name **Sri Lanka** in 1972.

The original flag of Sri Lanka featured just the lion and sword on a red field, recalling that the Sinhalese word for lion—“*Sinhala*”—is the basis of the island’s name. The flag’s yellow border symbolized the protection of the nation by Buddhism.

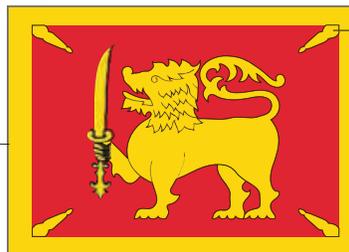
The flag was derived from the flag of the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy. It proved unpopular with minority

groups, so vertical bands of green, for Muslims, and orange, for the Hindu Tamils, were added in 1951.

When the country’s name changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka in 1972, four leaves were added. They denote the tree under which Siddhartha sat when he received enlightenment and became the Buddha. This version of the flag was in official use from 1978.

## FLAG OF KANDY

The “Lion Flag” was the national flag of Ceylon prior to 1815 when it became a British colony

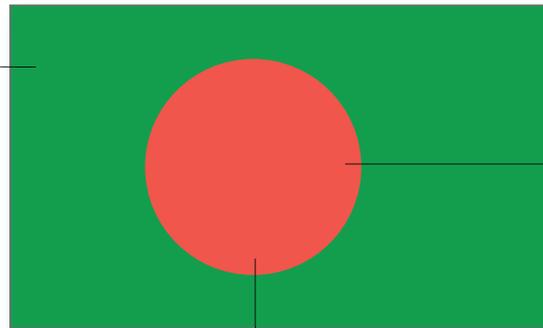


The finials are derived from the spire on top of a Buddhist temple

# Bangladesh

Ratio: 3:5 Adopted: January 25, 1972 Usage: National

*Green represents  
the land*



*The red disc  
symbolizes the  
struggle for  
independence*

*The red circle is set  
slightly toward the hoist*

Asia



**Bangladesh** was formerly the eastern province of Pakistan. After a civil war with Pakistan, it became a separate country in 1971.

The flag was originally adopted in March 1971, when the country gained independence, at which time it had a yellow silhouette map of the country in the red disc. This flag was used throughout the struggle for independence, but when the state was formally established in 1971 the outline map was omitted from the new national flag.

## ARMS OF BANGLADESH

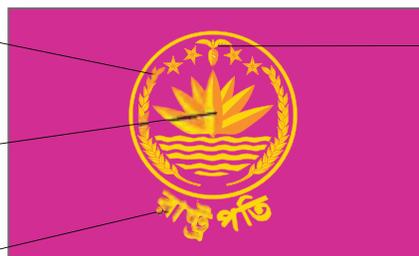
The coat of arms was adopted in 1972 and consists of the national flower, a water lily, known locally as the *shapla*, growing from stylized waves. Around it are ears of rice, and above is a sprig of jute, with four golden stars. The arms appears in the center of the President's flag, set on a deep purple field.

## THE PRESIDENT'S FLAG

*Wreath of rice*

*A shapla (winter lily)  
on stylized waves*

*The name of the  
state in Bangla*

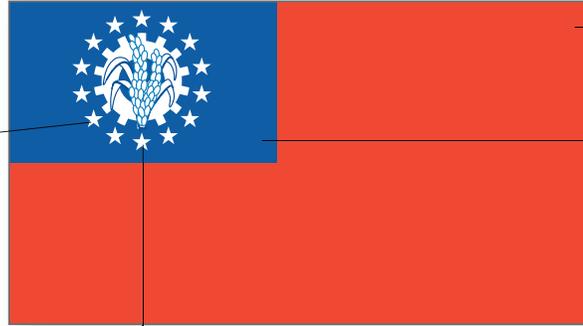


*A sprig of jute, with four  
golden stars representing  
nationalism, socialism,  
democracy, and  
secularism*

# Myanmar (Burma)

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** January 4, 1974 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The new socialist-style emblem was added in 1974*



*Red symbolizes courage*

*Blue represents peace*

*White represents purity*

## Asia



In 1886, **Myanmar** became a province of British India. It separated from India in 1937, and gained independence from British colonial control in 1948.

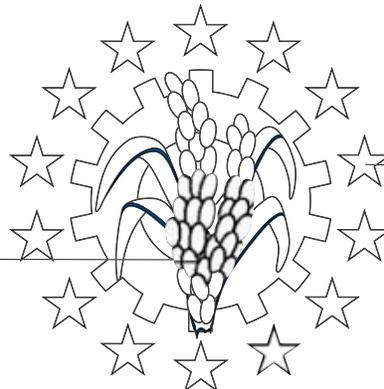
The flag originated in the Burman Resistance, which adopted a red flag with a white star when fighting the occupying Japanese forces during World War II. At independence, the star was modified to a blue canton with five small stars surrounding one large one, symbolizing the uniting of the country's diverse

peoples. Red stands for the courage of the people, blue is for peace, and white is for purity.

The emblem was changed in 1974 to represent the new socialist ideology in the country. The five stars were changed to 14, encircling a cog-wheel, for industry and a rice plant for agriculture.

## EMBLEM OF MYANMAR

*On the new socialist emblem, the rice stands for agriculture, while the cog-wheel represents industry*



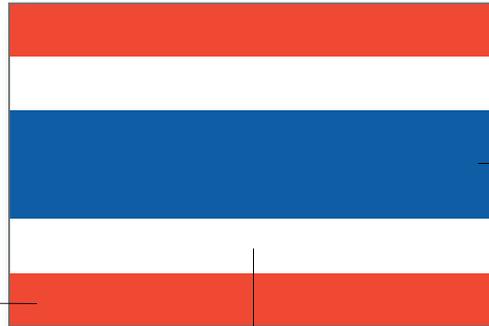
*14 stars represent the unity and equality between the 14 member states of the Union*

# Thailand

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** September 28, 1917 **Usage:** National and Civil

The blue and white stripes were added during World War I

*Red symbolizes life-blood*



*Blue represents the monarchy*

*White stands for the purity of the Buddhist faith*

Asia



Formerly known as the Kingdom of Siam, **Thailand** is the only Southeast Asian nation never to have been colonized.

Thailand is also known as the “Land of the White Elephant,” and this emblem appeared on its plain red flag in the 19th century. During World War I, horizontal white stripes were added above and below the elephant.

In 1917 the elephant was abandoned, and a blue stripe was

added to the middle of the flag in order to express solidarity with the Allies, whose flags were mostly red, white and blue. This flag is known as the *Trairanga* (tricolor).

The Royal Arms of Thailand was introduced in 1910. The arms feature the *garuda*, a bird-man in Hindu mythology.

## ARMS OF THAILAND

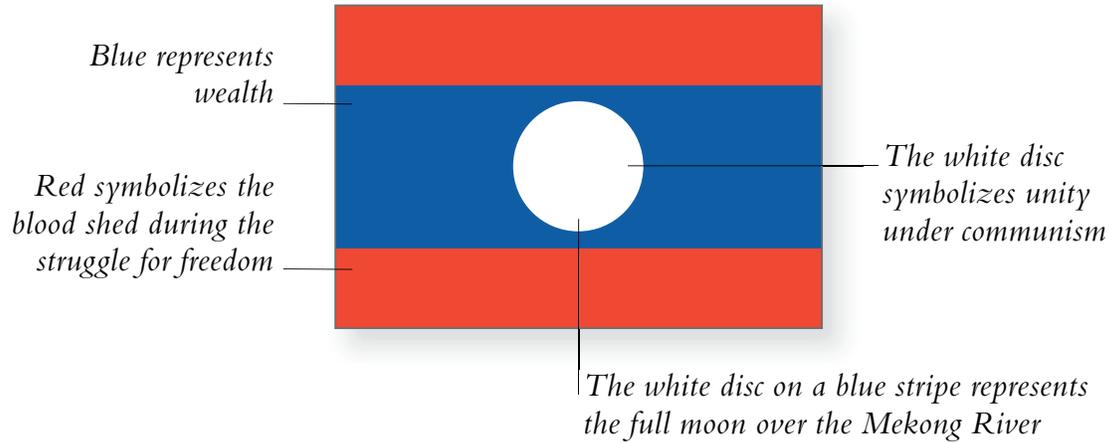
*The garuda of Hindu mythology is the enemy of all things poisonous*



*The red garuda is placed on a field of royal yellow for the Royal Standard*

# Laos

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** December 2, 1975 **Usage:** National and Civil



Asia



A French protectorate from the end of the 19th century, **Laos** gained full independence in 1953. It has been under communist rule since 1975.

The national flag of Laos was adopted in 1975, when the country became a people's republic. It is one of the few communist flags that does not use the five-pointed star as an emblem. This flag replaced the original flag of Laos, which was red, with a triple-headed white elephant on a pedestal beneath a parasol. This expressed the ancient name of the country, "Land of a Million Elephants," and dated from the 19th century.

## A FLAG FOR THE REPUBLIC

From 1953 onward, the royal government waged war with the Pathet Lao, whose flag was blue with a white disc and red borders

at the top and bottom. From 1973–1975, the Pathet Lao formed part of the government coalition, before assuming power directly and prompting the abdication of the king. Their flag was then adopted as the national flag.

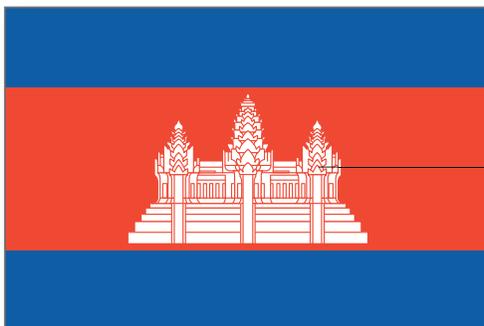
In the center is a white disc symbolizing the unity of the people under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the country's bright future. The red stripes stand for the blood shed by the people in their struggle for freedom, and the blue symbolizes their prosperity.

The white disc on a blue background is also said to represent a full moon against the Mekong River.

# Cambodia

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** June 29, 1993 **Usage:** National and Civil

Red and blue are traditional colors



*The famous temple of Angkor Wat has appeared in various forms on Cambodia's flag*

Asia



**Cambodia** was a French Protectorate until 1949 when it became nominally independent once more. Full independence was achieved in 1953.

The flag used today is the same as that established in 1948, although since then five other designs have been employed. These have almost all made use of the image of the temple of Angkor Wat in one form or another. This famous temple site, dates from the 12th century, was

built by the Mahidharapura monarchs. It has five towers, but these were not always all depicted in the stylized version used on flags. The temple also appears on the arms. The monarchy was restored in September 1993, the 1948 flag having been re-adopted in June of that year.

## ARMS OF CAMBODIA

*The glowing sun represents national rebirth*

*The inscription is the name of the country*



*Angkor Wat is a symbol of the nation and its greatness*

# Vietnam

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** November 30, 1955 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The gold five-pointed star is for the unity of five groups of workers in building socialism*



*Red symbolizes revolution and bloodshed*

Asia



In 1954 **Vietnam** was divided into north and south. In 1976, the north finally achieved its aim of reunification under communism.

Vietnam's national flag was adopted in 1976 at the end of the Vietnam War when North and South Vietnam were reunited under the new name of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This flag had been used by communist North Vietnam since 1955, a year after partition.

It is basically the same as the flag used by the national resistance movement, the Vietminh, led by Ho Chi Minh, in its struggle against the occupying Japanese forces during World War II.

## **SYMBOLISM OF THE COLORS**

The red color of the field stands for the revolution and for the blood shed by the Vietnamese people. The five-

pointed yellow star represents the unity of workers, peasants, intellectuals, youths, and soldiers in the building of socialism.

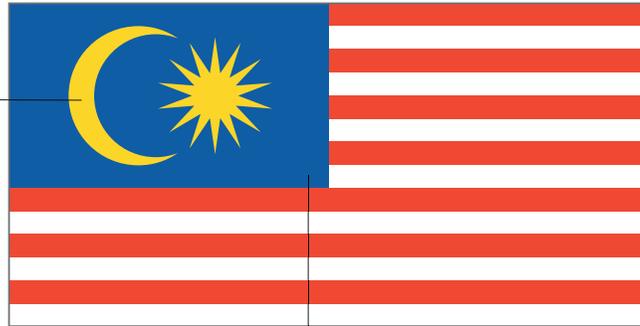
## **ARMS OF VIETNAM**

The national coat of arms, which was also re-adopted in 1976, had been used by North Vietnam since 1956. It depicts a cog-wheel, symbolic of industry, and the yellow five-pointed star of socialism, enclosed by a garland of rice—the country's main agricultural product. The name of the country is inscribed on a scroll at the base of the emblem. The symbols on both the arms and the flag were inspired by the Chinese flag.

# Malaysia

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** September 16, 1963 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The crescent  
and star of  
Islam*



The 14 red  
and white  
stripes for the  
14 states of  
the Federation

*The blue canton represents unity  
of the Malaysian people*

Asia



Malaya became independent of Britain in 1957. In 1963, the Federation of **Malaysia** was formed, although Singapore seceded in 1965.

The first flag of independent Malaya was based on the Stars and Stripes of the United States of America, combined with Islamic symbolism. It had 11 red and white stripes and a blue canton, like the US flag, with a gold crescent and an eleven-pointed star, traditionally associated with Islam. Both the number of stripes and points on the star denoted the 11 states of the Federation.

### THREE NEW STATES

In 1963 three new states—Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak—joined the Federation to form Malaysia. To reflect this the flag was amended to 14 red and white stripes representing the 14 states. When Singapore

seceded in 1965, the flag remained unaltered. The fourteenth stripe is now said to stand for the federal district of Kuala Lumpur.

### THE SYMBOLISM OF THE COLORS

The blue canton represents the unity of the Malaysian people. The crescent is for Islam, the dominant religion. The 14 points of the star are for unity among the states of the country. Yellow is the traditional color of the rulers of the Malay states. Red and white are also traditional colors in Southeast Asia.

The national motto appears on a scroll in the coat of arms. It is repeated in both Jawi and Roman script and means “Unity is Strength.”

## Malaysia: State flags

The flags of the Malaysian states were mostly derived from those of the 19th century, and were originally flags of the princes or sultans.



**JOHORE**

The blue field represents the government. The red canton is for the “*Hulubalang*” warrior caste, who defend the state. The crescent and star represent the ruler.



**KEDAH**

Red is the traditional color of Kedah. The sheaves of yellow padi, or rice, are for prosperity. The green crescent signifies Islam and the yellow shield is for sovereignty.



**KELENTAN**

The red field is symbolic of the loyalty and sincerity of the people, while the white emblem represents the ruler. Kelantan has 36 royal and official flags.



**KUALA LUMPUR**

Blue is for the unity of the population of Kuala Lumpur; red for courage and vigor; white is for purity, cleanliness and beauty; yellow for sovereignty and prosperity.



**LABUAN**

The colors are those of the national flag and they have the same symbolism; white recalls the purity of Buddhism and red represents the life-blood of the people.



**MELAKA**

The colors and pattern are taken from the national flag. Unlike the Malaysian flag, the flag of Melaka only has one stripe of red and one of white and a five-pointed star.



**NEGERI SEMBILAN**

This flag reflects the hierarchy of power in Malaysia. The yellow field symbolizes the ruler, the black triangle, the district rulers and the red triangle, the people.



**PAHANG**

White is for the ruler, because it can change to any other color, reflecting how a ruler can be influenced by popular opinion. Black represents the people, standing firm.

**PERAK**

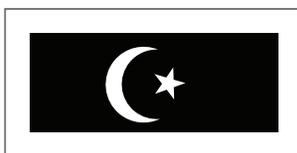
The three stripes represent different levels of the royal family. The Sultan is evoked by white, the Raja Muda by yellow and the Raja di-Hilir by black. The latter two are junior members of the ruling family.

**PINANG**

Light blue represents the blue seas around the island of Pinang. White is for the peace and serenity of the state and yellow for its prosperity. The tree is the Pinang palm, after which the state is named.

**SARAWAK**

Yellow is the traditional color of Borneo, where the state lies. Red and black are from the flag of the former Raja of Sarawak. The star has nine points for the nine districts of the state.

**TERENGGANU**

The white background stands for the Sultan. It envelops the black field, symbolizing the people. This reflects how the Sultan provides protection around his subjects.

**PERLIS**

Yellow represents the ruler and blue represents the people. The colors are arranged as two equal horizontal stripes to signify the close cooperation that should exist between the ruler and his subjects.

**SABAH**

The zircon blue (top stripe) is for tranquillity, white for purity and justice, red for courage, ice-blue (canton) for unity and prosperity, and royal blue for strength. The mountain is Kinabalu.

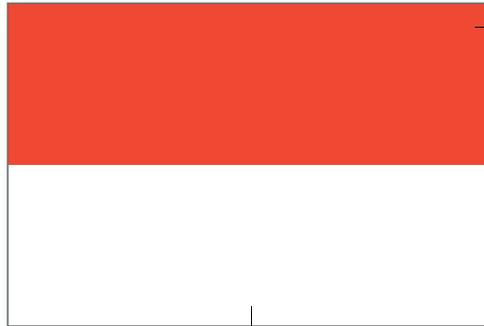
**SELANGOR**

The yellow and red quarters are symbolic of flesh and blood, the combination necessary for life. The crescent and star in the canton represent Islam, the dominant religion of the state.

# Indonesia

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** August 17, 1945 **Usage:** National and Civil

The flag is based on the banner of the 13th-century Indonesian Empire



Red represents the body

White symbolizes the soul

Asia



A former Dutch colony, **Indonesia** gained independence in 1949. Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya) was ceded to Indonesia in 1963.

The flag is based on the banner of the 13th-century Empire of Majahapit, red and white being the holy colors of Indonesia at that time. These colors were revived in the 20th century as an expression of nationalism against the Dutch. The first red and white flag flew in Java in 1928 and was adopted

as the national flag of the republic in 1945 when the country declared its independence. The red stripe is symbolic of physical life, while white represents spiritual life. Together they stand for the complete human being, body and soul. Red and white are also traditional colors of the Southeast Asian nations.

## ARMS OF INDONESIA

The arms show a shield supported by a mythical bird, the garuda. The 17 wing-feathers and 8 tail-feathers refer to the day and month (August 17) on which independence was declared in 1945



The shield depicts a buffalo head, a banyan tree, and sheaves of rice and cotton

The yellow star represents religious belief

The national motto means "Unity in Diversity"

# East Timor

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** May 20, 2002 **Usage:** National and Civil

*Black represents the oppression of the past*

*The white star symbolizes hope*



*Red stands for the struggle for national liberation*

*Yellow represents the wealth of the country*

Asia



**East Timor** voted for independence from Indonesia in 1999. A UN administration was in place until official independence on May 20, 2002.

At midnight on May 19, 2002, the UN flag was removed from outside the government offices in Dili, the capital. The new country, now officially recognized as a national state, has its own parliament, its own president, and its own flag.

## **NEW STATE, OLD FLAG**

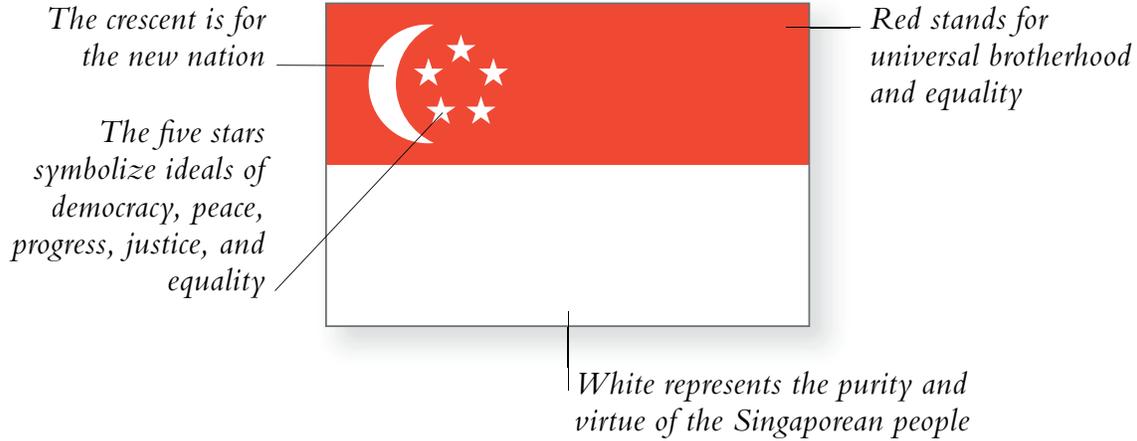
The flag illustrated above is actually the flag designed by the Fretilin party for the “Democratic Republic of Timor” in 1975, following the transition from Portuguese colony to independence. However, the infant nation’s subsequent invasion and occupation by Indonesia led to the adoption of that country’s flag for the last quarter of the twentieth century.

## **SYMBOLISM OF THE FLAG**

The black triangle represents the darkness of four centuries of colonial oppression under the Portuguese. The golden-yellow arrowhead recalls the long struggle for independence, as well as the hope of the country’s future prosperity. The red field reflects the blood shed by the Timorese people on their journey toward autonomy—a symbol which has taken on greater poignancy since the referendum for independence and the massacre of thousands of East Timorese by pro-Indonesian militias in 1999. The white of the star symbolizes peace, while the star itself represents the guiding light which gives hope for the future.

# Singapore

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** December 3, 1959 **Usage:** National and Civil



Asia



Granted self-government by Britain in 1959, **Singapore** became part of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, and fully independent in 1965.

The flag dates from when Singapore became a self-governing British colony in 1959. It was preserved when Singapore joined the Malaysian Federation and adopted as the national flag when Singapore became fully independent in 1965.

The colors of red and white are those of the Malay people. Red is supposed to represent universal

brotherhood and equality, while white symbolizes purity and virtue. The white crescent signifies the new nation of Singapore, while the five stars next to it represent the ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

The President's flag is a plain red field with the crescent and star emblem in the center.

## THE PRESIDENT'S FLAG



# Brunei

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** September 29, 1959 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The national emblem was placed in the center in 1959*



*Yellow represents the Sultan of Brunei*

Black and white stripes represent Brunei's chief ministers

Asia



**Brunei** became a British Protectorate in 1888. It gained full independence in 1984, and is now an absolute monarchy under its Sultan.

A similar version of this flag, without the coat of arms, was first used in 1906. The flag's main color, yellow, is associated with the Sultan, while the black and white stripes that cut across it are the colors of the Brunei's two chief ministers. The coat of arms in the center of the flag was added in 1959.

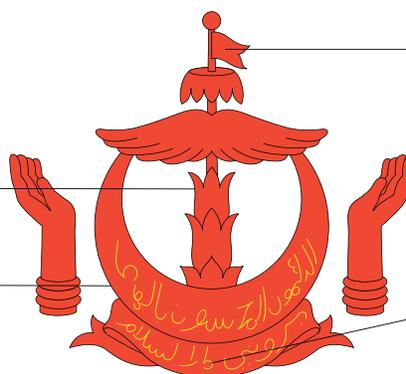
## THE NATIONAL ARMS

The coat of arms bears testament to Brunei's Muslim traditions with the crescent, a traditional symbol of Islam, at its center. The Arabic motto on the crescent translates as, "Always render service by God's guidance"; below it, a scroll bears the inscription "Brunei Darussalam" (City of Peace).

## ARMS OF BRUNEI

*The central mast is a symbol of the state*

*The crescent is symbolic of the Islamic faith*



*The flag and umbrella are symbols of royalty*

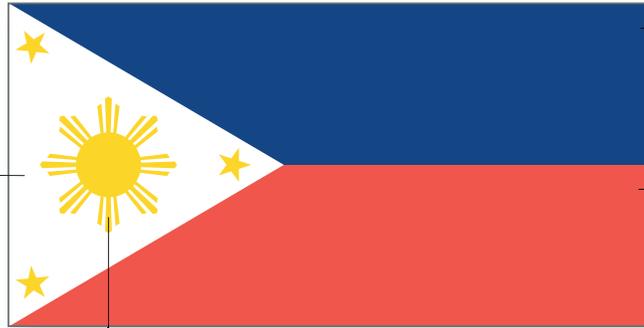
*The upturned hands signify the benevolence of the government*

*The inscription is the country's official title "Brunei Darussalam"*

# Philippines

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** May 19, 1898 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The white triangle symbolizes purity and peace*



*Blue represents patriotism*

*Red symbolizes bravery*

*The sun and stars represent the three main areas of the country—Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao*

Asia



The **Philippines** was a Spanish colony until 1898, when it was ceded to the United States of America. It gained its independence in 1946.

The flag was first used by Filipino nationalists in exile while the Spanish still controlled the islands. When they were ceded to the USA, the Philippines became far more autonomous, and the flag was flown freely from 1898. It was banned by the Americans from 1907–1919, and the Stars and Stripes was flown exclusively on the islands.

The sun and stars are Masonic in origin. The eight rays of the sun are for the eight provinces that revolted against the Spanish. The three stars represent the country's three main geographical areas. White stands for purity and peace; red for bravery and blue for patriotism. When used at war, the red stripe is flown at the top of the flag, representing courage.

## THE PRESIDENT'S FLAG

*The sun is taken from the national flag*



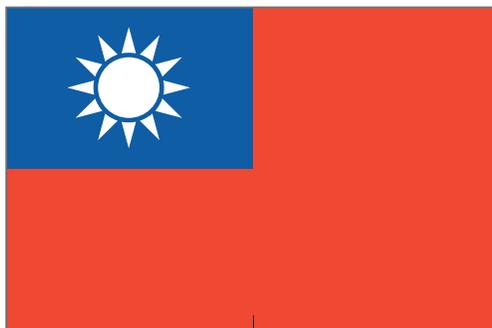
*The three stars and a golden sealion were adapted from the arms of Manila*

*A ring of 52 white stars of Manila*

# Taiwan

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** October 28, 1928 **Usage:** National

A blue flag with a white sun was the party flag of the Kuomintang. Each ray represents two hours of a day



The flag is said to represent “a white sun in a blue sky over red land”

*Red recalls the Han Chinese, the dominant ethnicity in China*

Asia



**Taiwan** was formerly part of China. It became a separate state in 1949 under the Nationalist Party, which was expelled from government in Beijing.

The flag adopted for Taiwan or Formosa, as it was known, had been the national flag of China. It was used from 1928–1949 when the Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party was in power.

The red field represents China, the blue canton and white sun was the party flag of the Kuomintang. The 12 rays of sunshine symbolize

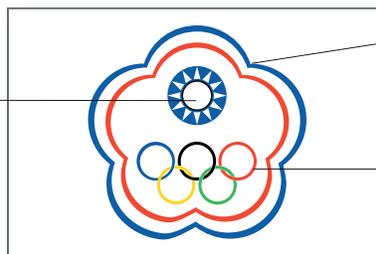
unending progress, each ray represents two hours of the day.

## THE TAIPEI OLYMPIC FLAG

This flag was adopted by Taiwan specifically for use at the Olympic Games, where its national flag was not accepted. It combines red, white, and blue; the national colors of Taiwan and the Olympic emblem.

## THE TAIPEI OLYMPIC FLAG

*The sun symbol is taken from the national flag*

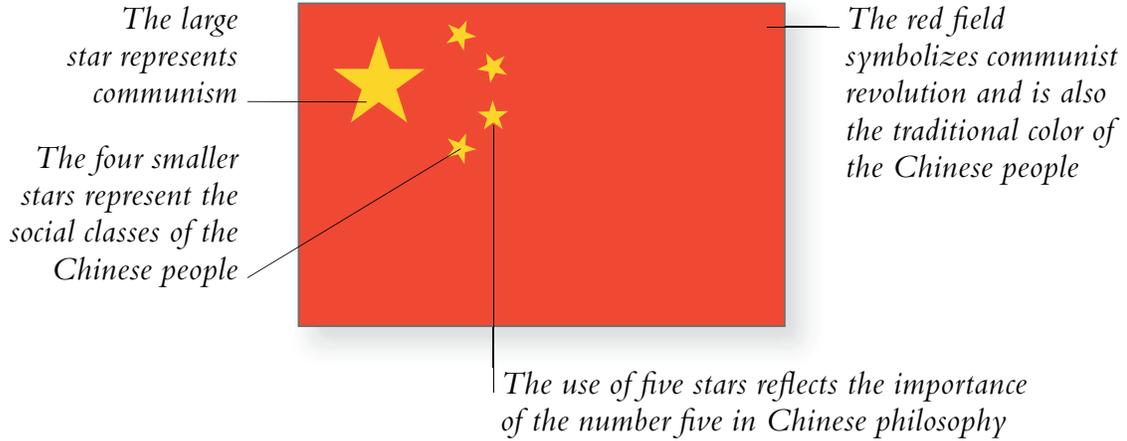


*Blue, red, and white are the national colors*

*The emblem of connected rings shows that it is an Olympic flag*

# China

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** October 1, 1949 **Usage:** National and Civil



Asia



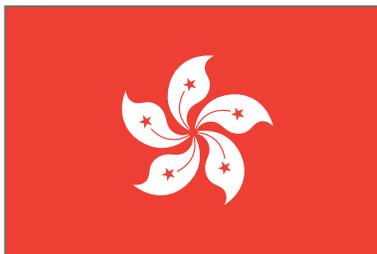
**China** has the world's oldest continuous civilization. The communist Chinese People's Republic was established in 1949.

China's first national flag originated in 1872. It was yellow with a blue dragon, representing the Manchu (Qing) Dynasty which ruled China for many years. The revolt of 1911 saw the changing of the flag to five different colored stripes. Soviet republics were established in the 1920s, each of which was represented by a red flag referring

to the Soviet fatherland. The present flag dates from 1949, when the People's Republic was formed.

The large star represents communism. The red field signifies revolution and echoes the ancient Han Dynasty of 206 BC. The four stars represent the four social classes: peasants, workers, petty bourgeoisie, and patriotic capitalists.

## FLAG OF HONG KONG (XIANGGANG) IN 1997



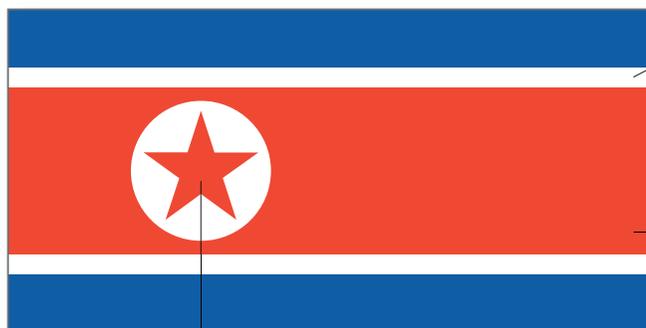
## FLAG OF MACAO IN 1999



# North Korea

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** September 9, 1948 **Usage:** National and Civil

Two blue stripes stand for sovereignty, peace and friendship



The white stripes symbolize purity

Red represents communist revolution

The star is a symbol of communism

Asia



The Kingdom of Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910. In 1948, the peninsula was partitioned into democratic South and communist **North Korea**.

The flag was adopted in 1948, when North Korea became an independent communist state. The traditional Korean flag was red, white and blue. The regime retained these colors—with more prominence given to the red—and added a red star on a white disc. The disc recalls the Chinese yin-yang symbol, which is found on the

flag of South Korea, and represents the opposing principles of nature. The red stripe expresses revolutionary traditions; while the red star is for communism.

The prominent theme of the Soviet-style coat of arms is industrialization, depicted with an electricity pylon and a large dam.

## ARMS OF NORTH KOREA

A hydroelectric power station within a wreath of rice-ears

Industrial elements feature heavily on the arms of Korea and include a large dam and electricity pylon

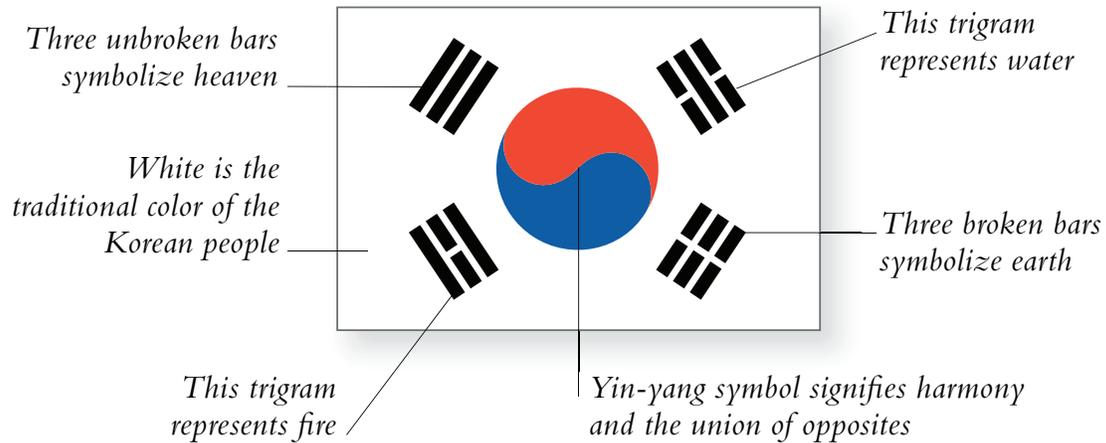


The star of communism

The inscription on the scroll is the country's official name—The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

# South Korea

**Ratio:** 2:3 **Adopted:** September 8, 1948 **Usage:** National and Civil



## Asia



**South Korea** forms the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, which was partitioned close to the 38th parallel after World War II.

The flag used by the Kingdom of Korea before 1910 featured the traditional colors: red, white, and blue. When South Korea separated from the north in 1948, the original flag was retained, but a few alterations were made.

### A NEW SOUTH KOREAN FLAG

At the flag's center is a disc containing an S-shaped line, the upper half being red, the lower half blue. This is derived from the Eastern yin-yang symbol, which represents the harmony of opposites in nature, for example, good and evil; male and female. When North and South Korea separated, the shape of the yin-yang was stylized in the

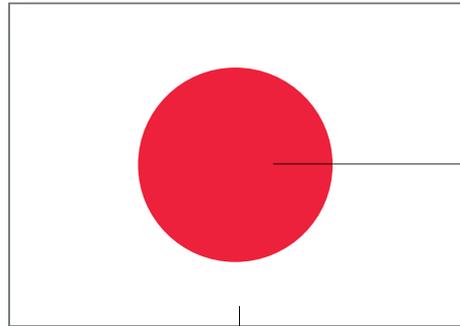
form of a Japanese *mon*. These are simplified versions of everyday objects, shown in symmetrical and regular forms. Yang is represented by red, and yin by blue.

The other alteration to the original flag in 1948 was to the trigrams (*kwae*) surrounding the yin-yang, which were reduced from eight to four. They are the basic trigrams from the *I-Ching*, a divination system widespread in the East. On the South Korean flag they symbolize the four polarities; heaven (upper hoist), water (upper fly), fire (lower hoist), and earth (lower fly). The white field of the flag represents peace and the white clothing traditionally worn by the Korean people.

# Japan

**Ratio:** 7:10 **Adopted:** January 27, 1870 **Usage:** National and Civil

The sun symbol has been an element in Japan's flags for thousands of years



*The red disc is named Hinomaru or disc of the Lucky Sun*

*The white field expresses honesty and purity*

Asia



Isolated from the world for centuries, **Japan** began to modernize in the 19th century. After defeat in World War II, it became a democracy.

Japan is known as “The Land of the Rising Sun.” The Emperor of Japan and his predecessors descend from the House of Yamato, which united the country in AD 200 and they claim to be direct descendants of the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami.

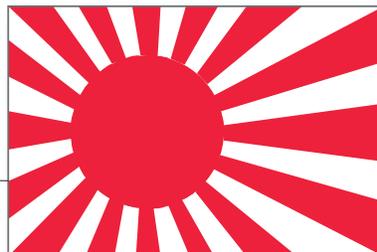
The current flag was officially established as the national flag of Japan in 1870.

## THE HINOMARU

The Lucky Sun or *Hinomaru*, in the center of the flag, has been an imperial badge since the 14th century. The white field stands for purity and integrity, and some suggest the red disc represents brightness, sincerity and warmth. The Japanese Maritime SDF ensign is an unusual adaptation of the national flag.

## JAPANESE MARITIME SDF ENSIGN

*Adopted in 1889, the naval ensign consists of the sun-disc with red rays extending to the border of the flag*

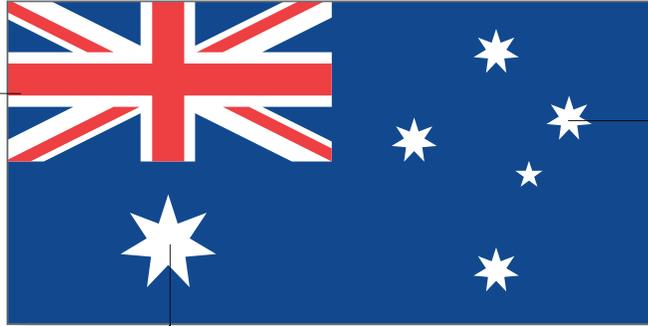


*Rays extend to the edge of the flag to recall the rising sun*

# Australia

**Ratio:** 2:1 **Adopted:** May 29, 1909 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The Union Jack is retained in the canton*



*The stars of the Southern Cross*

*The points of the "Commonwealth Star" represent the members of the Federation*

Australasia and Oceania



The great southern continent of **Australia** was unified in 1901, as a commonwealth of six formerly separate British subject states.

The first national flag was adopted in 1901 following various design competitions, but its use was restricted. It includes a blue ensign and three motifs, celebrating key aspects of Australian statehood.

## THE SOUTHERN CROSS

This constellation is visible throughout the year in southern night skies and has been used as a navigational aid for centuries. It helped guide early European ships to the continent and became a popular emblem for the new settlers. The five stars of the cross appear on the fly, with seven points for the brightest stars and five for the lesser Epsilon Crucis.

## THE UNION JACK

First flown on Australian soil by Captain Cook, it was the national flag from 1788 and remained the official citizens' land flag until 1954. It occupies the canton, denoting Australia's historical links with Great Britain.

## THE "COMMONWEALTH STAR"

This large star affirms the federal nature of government in Australia. Originally there were six points for the six federal states. The seventh point was added in 1909, to represent the Northern Territory together with the six other external territories administered by the Australian Federal Government.

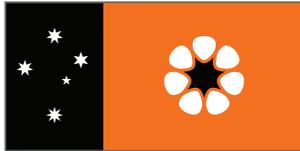
## State flags

The state flags all use the British Blue Ensign, with the state badge in the canton. The two territories do not follow this pattern.



**AUSTRALIAN  
CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

The capital territory became self-governing in 1989. The flag, adopted in 1993, depicts Canberra's city coat of arms and the Southern Cross in the city colors of blue and gold.



**NORTHERN  
TERRITORY**

Adopted by the territory in 1978, the flag depicts the Southern Cross and a stylized Sturt's desert rose against black and ocher, which are the territorial colors.



**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The state emblem of the piping shrike (a magpie) is shown with outstretched wings on a yellow background. The piping shrike was adopted as the flag badge in 1904.



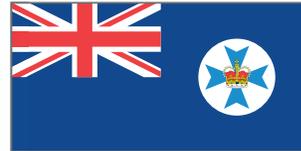
**VICTORIA**

The Royal Crown was added in 1877. The present arrangement, with the crown surmounting the Southern Cross, became the state arms in 1910.



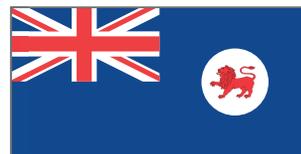
**NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

A gold star adorns each arm of the St. George's Cross, with a golden lion *passant guardant* at the center. This more distinctive badge replaced a previous design in 1876.



**QUEENSLAND**

The state badge depicts the Royal Crown at the center of a Maltese cross. The design of the crown was altered at the coronation of HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.



**TASMANIA**

The Red Lion *passant* on a white background recalls historical ties with England and has remained essentially unchanged since its adoption in 1875.



**WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA**

The Black Swan has been Western Australia's emblem since the first British colony was founded at Swan River. The flag was adopted in 1953.

# Vanuatu

**Ratio:** 11:18 **Adopted:** February 18, 1980 **Usage:** National and Civil



Australasia and Oceania



**Vanuatu**, formerly known as the New Hebrides, was jointly administered by Britain and France from 1906. In 1980, it gained its independence.

During its time as an Anglo-French condominium, the New Hebrides flew the French *Tricolore* side by side with the Union Jack. After the anglophone Vanuaaku Party led the country to independence as Vanuatu in 1980, the colors of the party flag—red, black, green, and yellow—were adopted as the basis for the design of a new national flag. The final design was chosen a few months before independence by a parliamentary committee from designs submitted by a local artist.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF THE COLORS

The yellow symbolizes sunshine; the green, the richness of the islands. The red is symbolic of blood, and

the black is for the Melanesian people. The Prime Minister requested the inclusion of the yellow and black fimbriations to give more prominence to the color representing the people. The yellow Y-shape denotes the pattern of the islands in the Pacific Ocean.

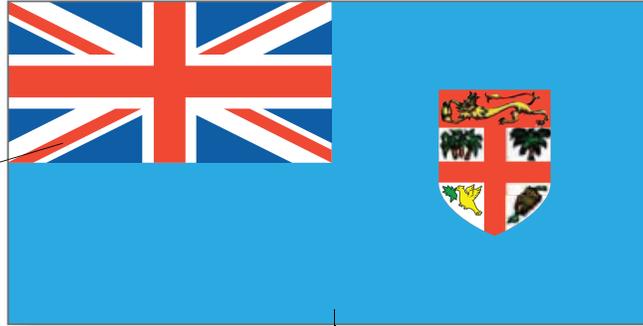
## THE BOAR'S TUSK

Between the arms of the “Y” lies the traditional emblem of a boar's tusk—the symbol of prosperity, worn as a pendant on the islands—crossed by two leaves of the local *namele* fern. The leaves are a token of peace, and their 39 fronds represent the 39 members of Vanuatu's legislative assembly.

# Fiji

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** October 10, 1970 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The Union Jack denotes the historical links with Great Britain*



The design is based on the British Blue Ensign

*The blue field represents the Pacific Ocean*

## Australasia and Oceania



**Fiji** became part of the British Empire in 1874, and an independent nation with dominion status within the Commonwealth in 1970.

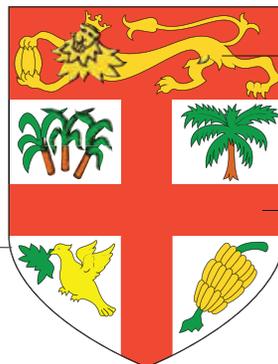
The flag was adopted in 1970, when Fiji achieved independence. Its bright blue background symbolizes the Pacific Ocean, which plays an important part in the lives of the islanders, both in terms of the fishing industry, and the burgeoning tourist trade. The Union Jack reflects the country's links with Great Britain.

### ARMS OF FIJI

The shield is derived from the country's official coat of arms, which was originally granted by Royal Warrant in 1908. The images depicted on the shield represent agricultural activities on the islands, and the historical associations with Great Britain.

### ARMS OF FIJI

*The first quarter shows sugar cane, the second a coconut palm, the third a dove of peace, and the fourth a bunch of bananas*



*On the chief, a British lion holds a coconut between its paws*

*The coat of arms was granted in 1908. It is a white shield, with a red cross and a red chief (the upper third of a shield)*

# Papua New Guinea

**Ratio:** 3:4 **Adopted:** June 24, 1971 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The five stars represent the Southern Cross, but also refer to a local legend about five sisters*



Red and black are the predominant colors in the native art of Papua New Guinea

*A golden bird of paradise*

Australasia and Oceania



**Papua New Guinea** gained full independence in 1975, following its status as a United Nations Trusteeship under Australian administration.

The Australian administration attempted to introduce Papua New Guinea's first official national flag in 1970. Its choice was a vertically divided flag: blue at the hoist, with the stars of the Southern Cross as in the Australian flag, then white, then green, with a golden bird of paradise. The proposed design was never popular with the local people.

## A LOCAL DESIGN

The current flag of yellow and white on black and red was designed by a 15-year-old art student, Susan Karike, and officially accepted in 1971. When Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975, it was retained as the national flag.

## THE COLORS OF NATIVE ART

The colors of the field—red and black—were chosen because of their widespread use in the native art of the country. The bird of paradise has long been a local emblem, and its feathers are used for traditional dress and in festivals and ceremonies.

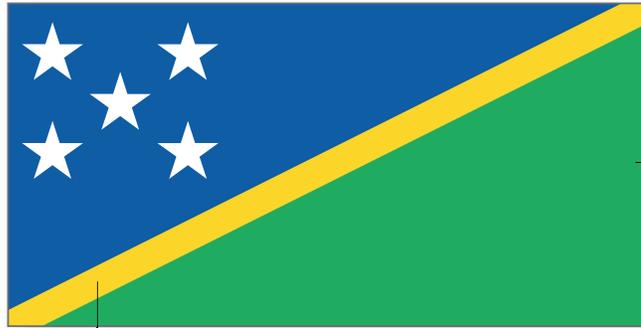
## THE SOUTHERN CROSS

The flag is halved diagonally. The lower half features the Southern Cross constellation in white on black, as it would appear in the night sky, over Papua New Guinea. This signifies the link with Australia and also recalls a local legend about five sisters. The red upper half bears a golden bird of paradise in flight.

# Solomon Islands

**Ratio:** 5:9 **Adopted:** November 18, 1977 **Usage:** National and Civil

The five stars represent the five main groups of islands



Green represents the land

The yellow stripe symbolizes sunshine

Australasia and Oceania



The **Solomon Islands** were a British colony from 1883, until they became self-governing in 1976, and subsequently independent in 1978.

Before the current flag was adopted in 1977, three different coats of arms had represented the islands.

The national flag, adopted in 1977, is divided diagonally by a stripe of yellow representing the sunshine of the islands. The two triangles formed by the diagonal stripe are blue and green, signifying

water and the land. The five stars were initially incorporated to represent the country's five districts. The islands were later divided into seven districts and the symbolism of the stars was modified to refer to the five main groups of islands.

The coat of arms is also in the colors of the national flag.

## ARMS OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

The crest is a traditional canoe (in section) and a shining sun

A freshwater crocodile

The national motto –  
"To lead is to serve"



A shark

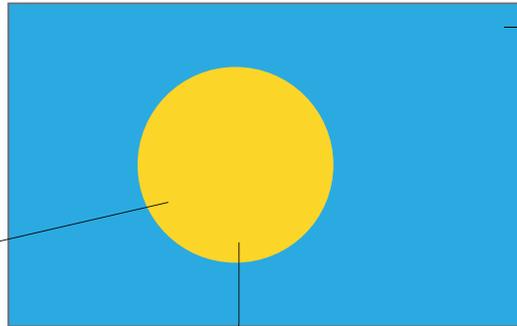
The shield depicts frigate birds, an eagle, two turtles, a shield and bow and arrow, all representing districts of the Solomon Islands

The compartment is a stylized frigate bird

# Palau

**Ratio:** 5:8 **Adopted:** January 1, 1981 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The golden disc depicts the full moon, considered by Palauans to be the best time for celebrations and harvesting*



*Blue symbolizes the freedom of self-rule*

*The full moon is set slightly toward the hoist*

## Australasia and Oceania



Under US control since 1945, **Palau** became a republic in 1981. In 1994, it became independent in association with the United States.

The current flag was introduced in 1981 when Palau became a republic. Previously, the flag of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands was flown jointly with the United Nations and United States flags.

### THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FLAG

The flag's very simple design belies the depth of meaning attributed to it. The explanation for the choice of colors is rooted in the history and customs of the Palauan people. The bright blue of the field, which might be assumed to be symbolic of the Pacific Ocean, is in fact a representation of the transition from foreign domination to self-government. The golden disc, which

sits slightly off center toward the hoist, represents the full moon. The Palauans consider the full moon to be the optimum time for human activity. This time of the month when celebrations, harvesting and planting, fishing, tree-felling, and the carving of traditional canoes are carried out. The moon is a symbol of peace, love and tranquility.

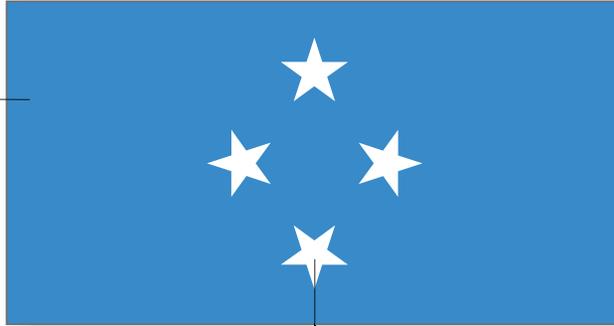
### THE SEAL OF PALAU

Palau does not have a coat of arms, but has a seal, adopted in 1981, when the country became a republic. The seal is not colored. It depicts a traditional Palauan triangular hut, above the date of adoption. This is surrounded by the title of the state.

# Micronesia

**Ratio:** 10:19 **Adopted:** November 30, 1978 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The light blue field recalls the Pacific Ocean*



The colors are similar to those of the UN flag

*The four stars each represent an island group*

Australasia and Oceania



**Micronesia** was part of the US-administered United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, until it became independent in 1979.

The flag, adopted in 1978, is in the colors of the UN flag. The light blue also represents the Pacific Ocean.

In an echo of US practice, the stars are for the four islands, arranged like the points of the compass.

## Micronesian States



**CHUUK**

The white coconut palm shows that the people depend on coconut resources. The white stars represent the 38 municipal units in the territory.



**KOSRAE**

The olive branches symbolize peace. The four stars are for the islands' four units. The *fafa* stone is traditionally used for grinding food.



**POHNPEI**

The eleven stars are for the district's eleven municipalities. The half coconut shell represents the *sakau* cup used in traditional ceremonies.



**YAP**

The outer and inner rings show a *rai*, a traditional symbol of unity. The white outrigger canoe symbolizes the desire to reach state goals.

# Marshall Islands

**Ratio:** 10:19 **Adopted:** May 1, 1979 **Usage:** National and Civil

*A 24-pointed star, one for each of the districts on the islands*



The two stripes, orange over white, represent the two parallel chains of the Marshall Islands

*Blue field for the Pacific Ocean*

Australasia and Oceania



The **Marshall Islands** were part of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from 1945–1986. They became fully independent in 1990.

The Marshall Islands became a self-governing territory on May 1, 1979, and on that day a new national flag was adopted. Designed by Emlain Kabua, wife of the president of the new government, it was the winning entry in a competition that had attracted 50 designs.

## A FLAG FOR A PACIFIC ISLAND

The flag's dark blue field represents the vast area of the Pacific Ocean over which the islands are scattered. The star symbolizes the geographical position of the islands, which lie a few degrees above the Equator. The star has 24 points, representing the 24 municipalities of the Marshall Islands. Four of its rays extend

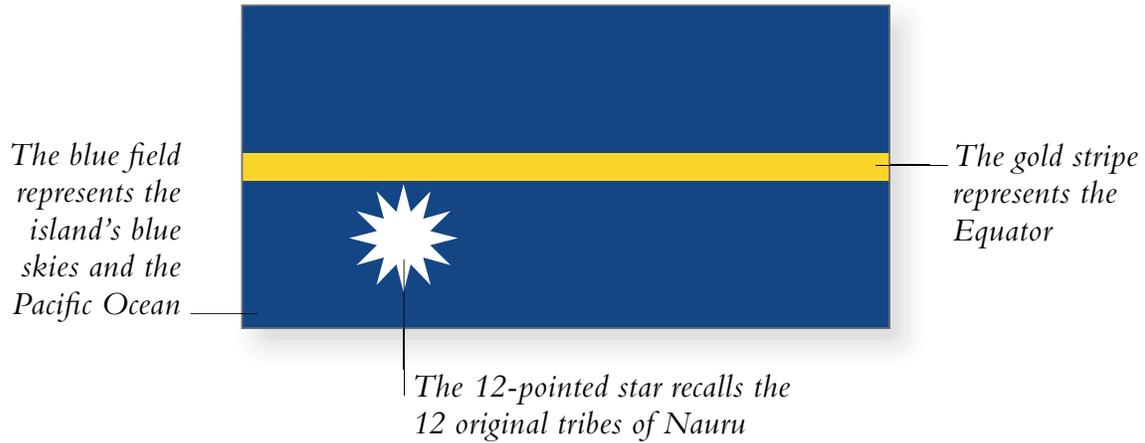
further than the others and stand for the capital, Majuro, and the administrative districts of Wotji, Yaluit, and Kwajalein. They also form a cross, signifying the Christian faith of the Marshallese.

## SYMBOLS OF PROSPERITY

The two parallel stripes extending across the flag symbolize the two parallel chains of the Marshall Islands: the Ratak (Sunrise) Chain is white, the Ralik (Sunset) Chain is orange. The stripes extend and widen upward. This is said to signify the increase in growth and vitality of life on the islands. Orange also symbolizes courage and prosperity, while white represents peace.

# Nauru

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** January 31, 1968 **Usage:** National and Civil



Australasia and Oceania



**Nauru** was jointly administered by Australia, the UK and New Zealand from 1947 until independence was granted in 1968.

The flag, chosen in a local design competition, was adopted on the day of independence. It depicts Nauru's geographical position, one degree below the Equator. A gold horizontal stripe representing the Equator runs across a blue field for the Pacific Ocean. Nauru itself is symbolized by a white twelve-pointed star. Each

point represents one of the 12 indigenous tribes on the island.

## ARMS OF NAURU

This is also a local design and includes the chemical symbol for phosphorus; phosphates are Nauru's main export. Beneath it are a frigate bird and a sprig of *tomano*.

## ARMS OF NAURU



# Kiribati

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** July 12, 1979 **Usage:** National and Civil

The red shield in the coat of arms also depicts a gold flying frigate bird above a rising golden sun



*The frigate bird symbolizes command of the sea*

*The blue and white wavy bands represent the Pacific Ocean*

Australasia and Oceania



Once part of the British colony of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the Gilberts became independent in 1979 and adopted the name **Kiribati**.

Kiribati's flag is one of only three national flags which are armorial banners—flags having a design which corresponds exactly to that of the shield in the coat of arms.

## ARMS OF KIRIBATI

The coat of arms dates back to May 1937 when it was granted to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, as Kiribati and Tuvalu were then known. The shield, was then incorporated into the center of the fly half of a British Blue Ensign as the state ensign of the colony.

Shortly before independence was granted in 1979, a local competition was held to choose a new national flag and a design based on the

colonial coat of arms, was submitted to the College of Arms. The College of Arms decided to modify the design. Both the golden frigate bird and the sun were enlarged to occupy more of the top of the flag and the width of the blue and white wavy bands was reduced.

## THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

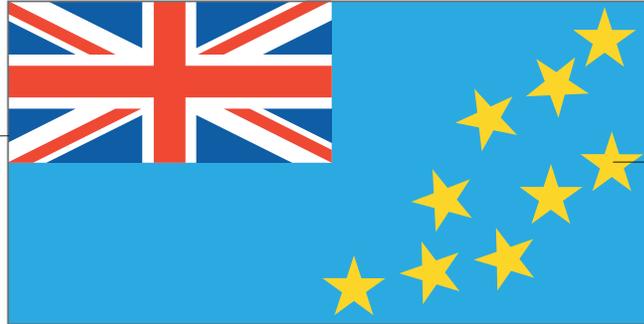
However, the local people insisted on the original design, in which the top and bottom halves of the flag were equal, the sun and local frigate bird small, and the various design elements outlined in black.

The new flag was hoisted during the independence day celebrations in the capital, Tarawa on July 12, 1979.

# Tuvalu

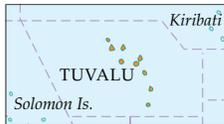
**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** October 1, 1978 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The Union Jack signifies continuing links with Britain*



*The nine stars are for the nine islands*

Australasia and Oceania



The Ellice Islands separated from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1975, and adopted the name **Tuvalu**. Independence was gained in 1978.

Tuvalu means “eight islands,” although there are in fact nine, each of which is represented by a star on the flag. The stars’ arrangement is supposed to reflect the islands’ geographic distribution.

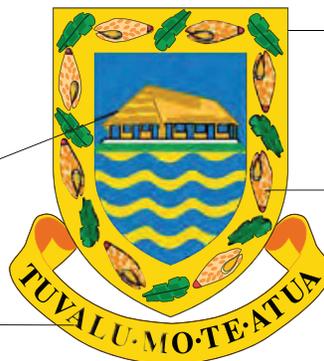
This flag was chosen because it symbolizes the continuing links with Britain and the Commonwealth.

However, anti-Commonwealth feeling rose and in 1995, the government decided on a new flag without the Union Jack. The new flag introduced later that year, retained the stars, but included the arms in a triangle at the hoist. In April 1997 the original design was re-adopted, following a change of government.

## ARMS OF TUVALU

*The coat of arms depicts a local meeting house or maneapa*

*The motto means “Tuvalu for God”*

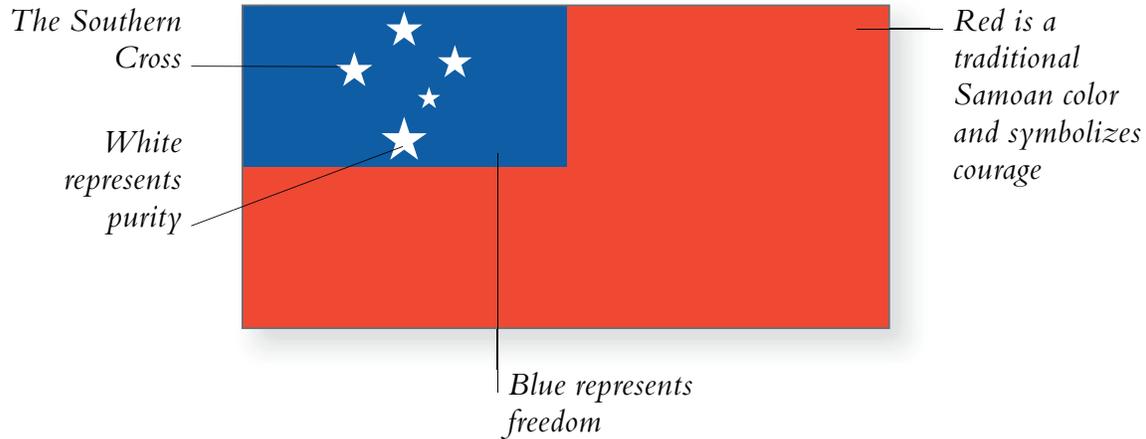


*Eight sets of objects reflect the country’s title, “Eight Together”*

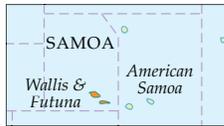
*The border contains eight sea shells and eight banana leaves*

# Samoa

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** January 1, 1962 **Usage:** National and Civil



Australasia and Oceania



Under the administration of Germany, the USA and later New Zealand, **Samoa** became the first independent Polynesian nation in 1962.

Prior to 1899, when Samoa was partitioned by Germany and the USA, it was ruled by the rival kingdoms of Malietoa and Tamasese.

The flag of Malietoa was probably inspired by missionaries. It was a plain red field, with a white cross and a white star in the canton. The rival King of Tamasese favored the German cause and used flags with black crosses.

## A UNITED FLAG

In 1948, by then a territory of New Zealand, Samoa was granted its current flag. This was created jointly by the kings of Malietoa and Tamasese. It comprised a red field taken from the former flag of

Malietoa and the Southern Cross from the flag of New Zealand, on a blue field in the canton.

In 1949, the smaller fifth star was added, making the Southern Cross more like that on the Australian flag. The flag was retained when independence was granted in 1962.

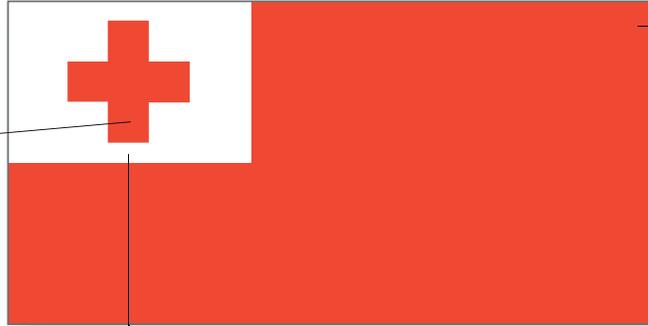
## ARMS OF SAMOA

The coat of arms was adopted in 1951 and contains symbols reflecting the Christian faith of the Samoan people. It depicts a shield of the Southern Cross, below a coconut palm from the previous colonial badge. Above the shield is a cross recalling the national motto—"May God be the foundation of Samoa."

# Tonga

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** November 4, 1875 **Usage:** National and Civil

*The red cross represents the king's devotion to Christianity*



*Red represents the blood Jesus shed on the cross*

*White symbolizes purity*

## Australasia and Oceania



**Tonga** was unified under King George Tupou I in 1820. In 1900, it became a British protectorate before regaining its independence in 1970.

The flag dates from 1862 when the king at the time, who had converted to Christianity in 1831, called for a national flag which would symbolize the Christian faith.

### A NEW "CHRISTIAN" FLAG

The first design was a plain white flag with a red couped cross, but this was later found to be too similar to

the International Red Cross flag, adopted in 1863, and so the white flag was placed in the canton of a red one. The cross and the red color signify the sacrifice of Christ's blood. The 1875 constitution states that the flag shall never be altered.

The naval ensign, introduced in 1985, also has a red couped cross on white in the canton.

### TONGAN NAVAL ENSIGN

*Red couped cross in the canton*



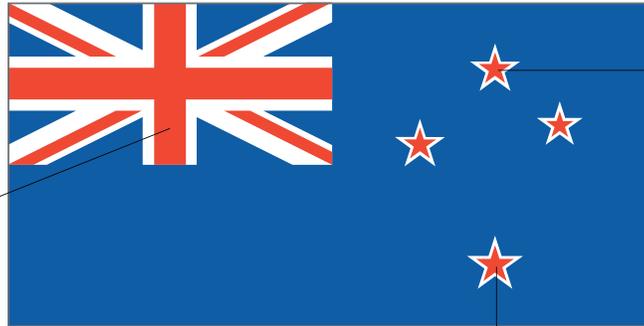
*The naval ensign, introduced in 1985, recalls the flag of Imperial Germany*

*A red, cotised or bordered, Scandinavian cross*

# New Zealand

**Ratio:** 1:2 **Adopted:** June 12, 1902 **Usage:** National

*The Union Jack in the canton recalls New Zealand's colonial ties to Britain*



*Four white-bordered red stars represent the Southern Cross*

*The stars all vary slightly in size*

Australasia and Oceania



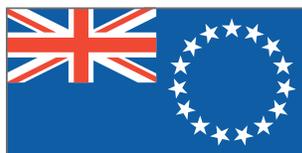
**New Zealand** was settled by the British in the 1800s and was a colony from 1841. It became a dominion in 1907 and fully independent in 1947.

New Zealand's first flag was adopted before it became a British colony. Chosen by an assembly of Maori chiefs in 1834, the flag was of a St. George's Cross with another cross in the canton containing four stars on a blue field. After the formation of the colony in 1841, British ensigns began to be used.

## A NEW NATIONAL FLAG

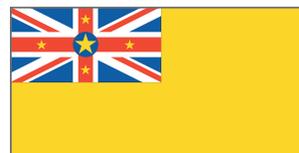
The current flag was designed and adopted for restricted use in 1869 and became the national flag in 1902. It is the British Blue Ensign, with a highly stylized representation of the Southern Cross constellation. It depicts only four of the five stars in the constellation.

## Overseas Territories



**COOK ISLANDS**

The 15 stars on the fly represent the 15 main islands of the group; they are arranged in a ring to indicate that each island is of equal importance.



**NIUE**

The link with the UK is shown by the use of the Union Jack; that with New Zealand by the four stars. The large central star represents Niue itself.

# International flags

Many international organizations also adopt flags. Below is a selection of the most well-known.



**ARAB LEAGUE**



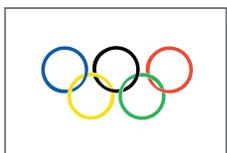
**CARICOM**  
(Caribbean Community and Common Market)



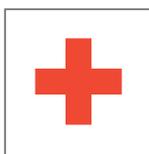
**CIS**  
(Commonwealth of Independent States)



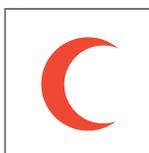
**FIAV**  
(International Federation of Vexillological Associations)



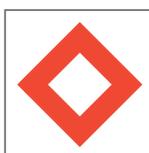
**OLYMPIC MOVEMENT**



**RED CROSS**



**RED CRESCENT**



**RED CRYSTAL**

In 2006, the Red Crystal was adopted for use with, or in place of, the Red Cross or Red Crescent flags. It is non-religious-specific, but the cross and crescent may be added in the center.



**ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS**



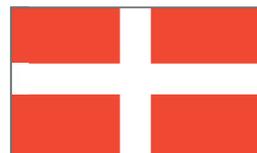
**THE COMMONWEALTH**



**EUROPEAN UNION**



**NATO**  
(North Atlantic Treaty Organization)



**ORDER OF ST JOHN**



**OPEC**  
(Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries)



**AU**  
(African Union)



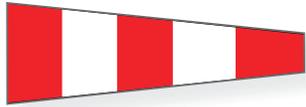
**SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY**



**UNITED NATIONS (UN)**

# Signal flags

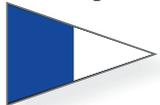
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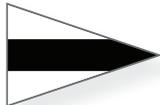
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2nd Repeat



3rd Repeat



A



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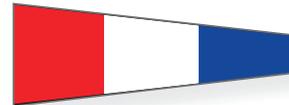
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# EUROPE (see front endpaper for World Map)

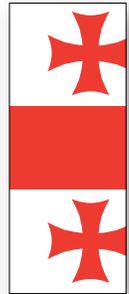
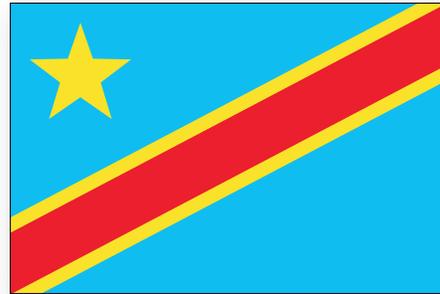


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