

World flags are diverse and astonishing. Each of them has its own story and culture. This can be verified by looking at the flags of [Asia](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en15-asian-flags-aesthetics/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en15-asian-flags-aesthetics/>), [Africa](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en9-the-amazing-diversity-of-african-flags/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en9-the-amazing-diversity-of-african-flags/>), [Europe](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en4-an-unconventional-look-at-the-european-map/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en4-an-unconventional-look-at-the-european-map/>), [Oceania](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en20-oceania-flags-in-the-symbolism-of-the-island-nations/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en20-oceania-flags-in-the-symbolism-of-the-island-nations/>), [North](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en31-north-american-flags-differentiation/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en31-north-american-flags-differentiation/>) and [South](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en25-nature-gold-blood/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en25-nature-gold-blood/>) America. Some flags are full with hidden symbolism while others are designed to reflect certain historical events, but each flag has its own features and characteristics.

There are several distinctive features by which it would be appropriate to classify flags. These include:

- Flag shape (sides ratio);
- The predominant color on the flag (which color takes most of the space);
- Color set on the flag (Pan-African, Pan-Slavic, Pan-Arab colors);
- Color separation type (bicolor, tricolor);
- Flag adoption period (year of adoption);
- Color symbolism: the same color can mean different things on different flags. For example, green can symbolize: natural resources, Islam, hope and so on.
- Symbol used on the flag (for example: a star / stars, cross / Scandinavian cross, crescent, circle, etc.);
- Number of colors on the flag.

The classification presented below is based solely on the color separation type. It includes all the 195 countries of the world.

## Monochrome

In the first group we will put flags with a monochrome background. Currently, there are no pure one-color flags.



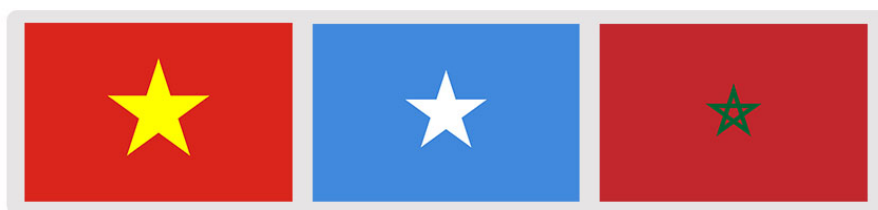
Pattern of the monochrome flags with a symbol

But there are eight flags that use one symbol on a monochrome background. These are flags of: Switzerland, that uses a white cross; Albania, that uses a black double-headed eagle; Vietnam, Somalia and Morocco, that have one star; and Japan, Bangladesh and Palau, that use a circle symbolizing the Sun.



Flag of Switzerland

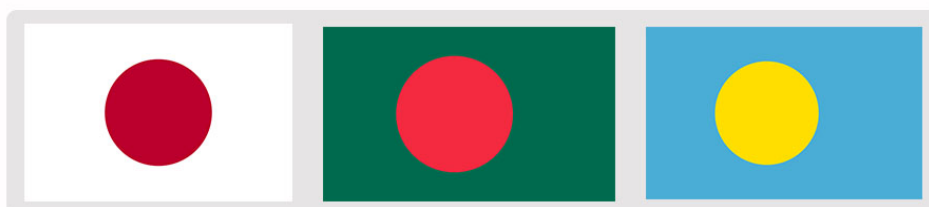
Flag of Albania



Flag of Vietnam

Flag of Somalia

Flag of Morocco



Flag of Japan

Flag of Bangladesh

Flag of Palau

Monochrome flags with a symbol

Also, a subgroup can be identified among the monochrome — sophisticated monochrome flags with multiple or difficult symbols. This group includes the thirteen remaining monochrome flags:



Flag of Republic of Korea

Flag of Saudi Arabia

Flag of Cyprus



Flag of Brazil

Flag of the Maldives

Flag of Montenegro



Flag of Saint Lucia

Flag of Kyrgyzstan

Flag of Tunisia



Flag of Federated States of Micronesia

Flag of China

Flag of Turkey

Flag of Mauritania

Sophisticated monochrome flags with multiple symbols

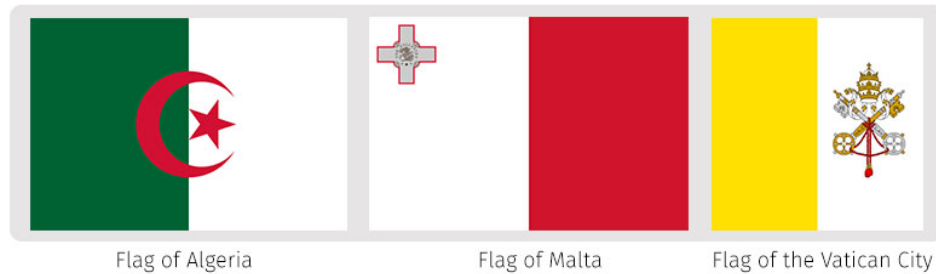
## Bicolors

The next big group includes flags with two evenly distributed colors. Usually such flags include symbols, but there are also four pure horizontal bicolors.



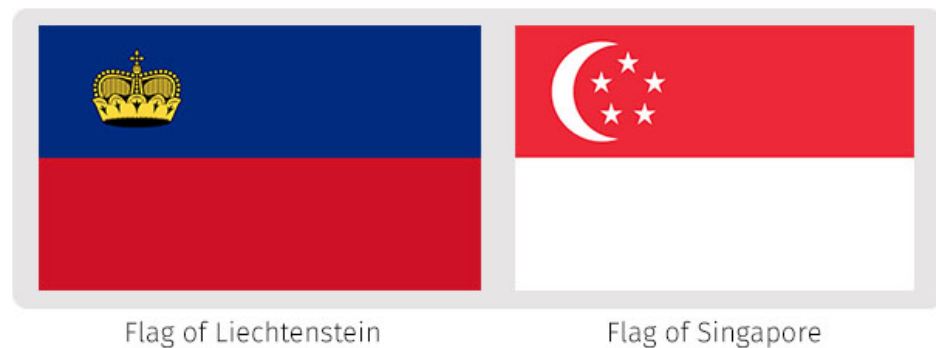
## Pattern of the horizontal bicolor flags

Bicolors can be divided into horizontal and vertical.



Vertical bicolors with a symbol

There are significantly more horizontal bicolors in the world, therefore they can be divided into several groups: horizontal bicolors with a canton, pure horizontal bicolors and horizontal bicolors with a symbol in the center.



Horizontal bicolors with a canton



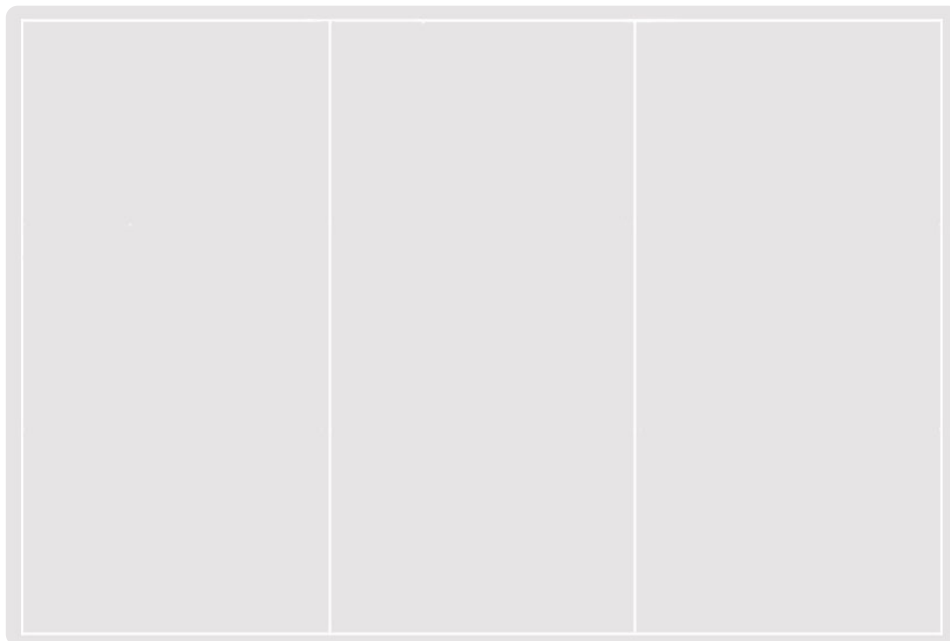
Pure horizontal bicolors



Horizontal bicolors with a symbol in the center

## Three Vertical Stripes

This group can also be divided into several subgroups. The same type of flag division into three stripes will unite the subgroups.



Three vertical stripes flag pattern

Pure three stripes flags, in turn, can be divided based on the color of the central stripe: yellow or white.



Flag of Nigeria

Flag of Ireland



Flag of France

Flag of Italy

Flag of Ivory Coast



Flag of Guinea

Flag of Mali

Flag of Belgium

Flag of Chad

Flag of Romania

### Vertical three stripes flags

The next subgroup in addition to three vertical stripes includes a coat of arms or a symbol in the center of the flag. To illustrate, let's distinguish flags with the same color of the outer stripes — flags of Barbados and Peru, Pan-African flags with a star in the center and the remaining flags with a coat of arms in the center. Excluding only the Afghan flag, whose coat of arms is colored into white in order to be seen on the red color. Other colors of this subgroup have a completely identical coat of arms on their flags to their original one.



Flag of Barbados

Flag of Peru



Flag of Cameroon

Flag of Senegal



Flag of Guatemala

Flag of Mexico

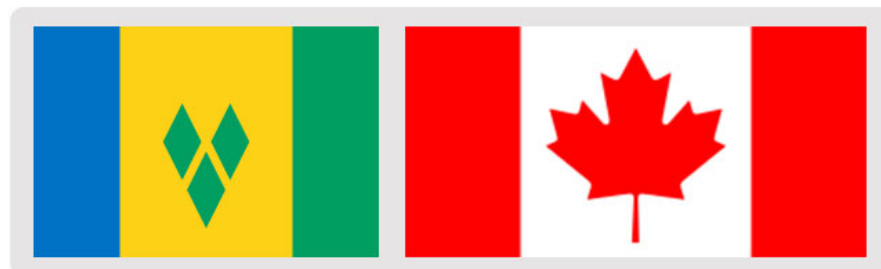
Flag of Afghanistan

Flag of Andorra

Flag of Moldova

Vertical tree stripes flags with a coat of arms or a symbol

The next subgroup is called the “Canadian pale” in honor of the Canadian flag, or, more specifically, due to its type of color division. The stripes ratio in this case is different from the usual  $1/3$  and is equal to  $1/2$  of the flag’s length. Initially, the Canadian pale meant a square in the middle and vertical stripes on the sides half the size of the square. But later, any flag with a wide stripe in the middle was called as a Canadian pale. This type of division has spread widely enough, but among fully recognized sovereign states such flags are used by only two countries: St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Canada itself.



Flag of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Flag of Canada

Canadian pale

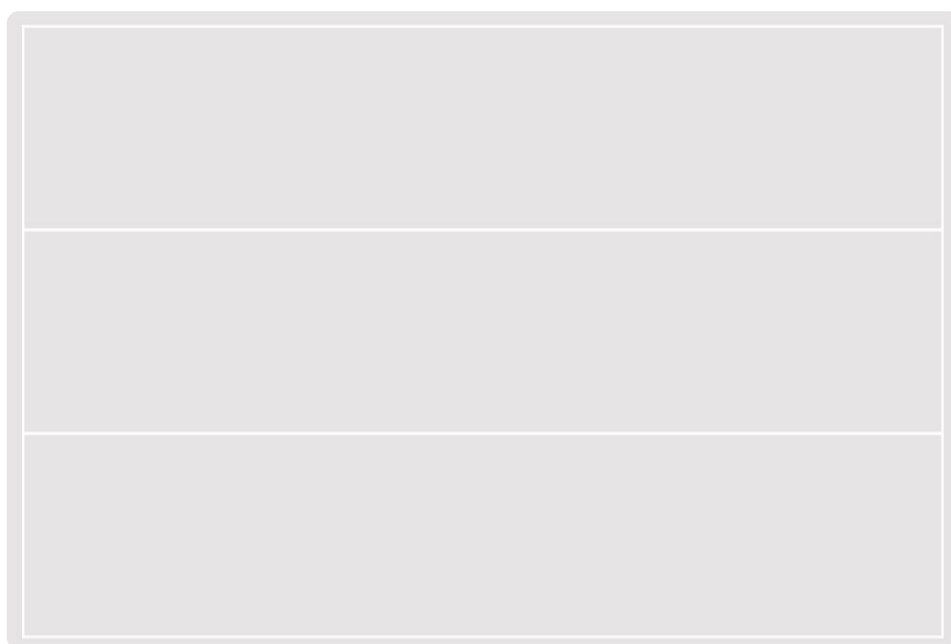
We will also attribute the flag of Mongolia to the vertical three stripes group, whose does not fit into the rest of this group due to the peculiar position of the state symbol — the Soyombo symbol. It is a relatively ancient Hindu-Buddhist symbol popular in this country.



Flag of Mongolia

## Three Horizontal Stripes

Flags of this type are the most popular in the world, in one way or another there are around 55 of such flags.



Three horizontal stripes flag pattern

The first subgroup includes pure three horizontal stripes flags. Such division on its flag is used by thirteen countries, nine of which are European.



Flags with three horizontal stripes

The next subgroup is the largest — flags with three stripes and a coat of arms or a symbol are used by 19 countries in the world.



Three horizontal stripes with a coat of arms or a symbol

Flags of Laos, Cambodia, Lebanon and Libya can be put in a separate subgroup. These flags are similar to the Canadian pale and the only difference is that they are horizontally oriented.





Flag of Libya



Flag of Laos

Flag of Cambodia

Flag of Lebanon

Three horizontal stripes with a wide central stripe

Another subgroup is formed by Serbian and Slovakian flags — these Slavic countries use tricolors with their coat of arms at the flagpole, Pan-Slavic colors are typical for them.



Flag of Serbia

Flag of Slovakia

Horizontal tricolors with the coat of arms at the flagpole

Latvian flag is unique in its division; flags of Colombia, Ecuador and Rwanda can be put in one subgroup, that has a special division of colors — tricolors with a wide upper stripe. Flags of Israel, North Korea, Belize and Spain have two stripes at the top and bottom. And flags of Malawi, Uzbekistan, Slovenia and Iran are different from all of the mentioned groups and subgroups.



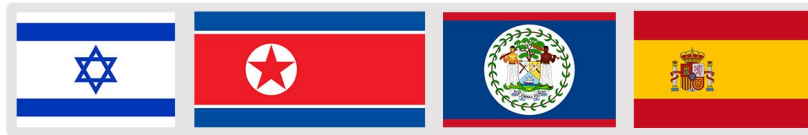
Flag of Latvia



Flag of Colombia

Flag of Ecuador

Flag of Rwanda

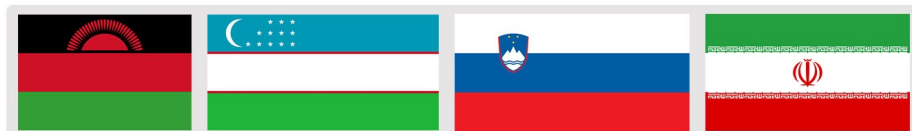


Flag of Israel

Flag of North Korea

Flag of Belize

Flag of Spain



Flag of Malawi

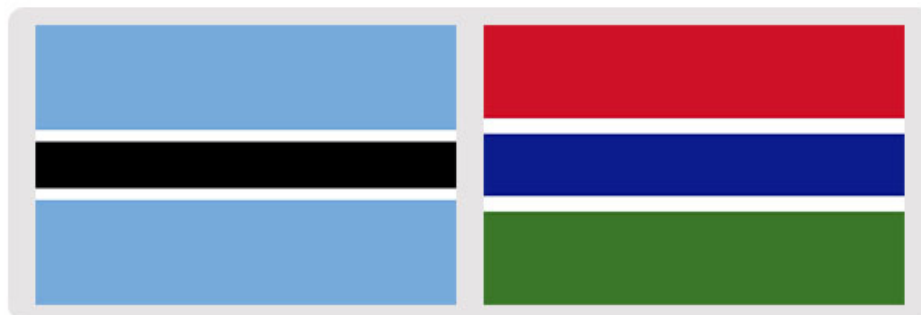
Flag of Uzbekistan

Flag of Slovenia

Flag of Iran

Other flags with three stripes

Flags of Botswana and Gambia form a small subgroup with an edging of the center line.

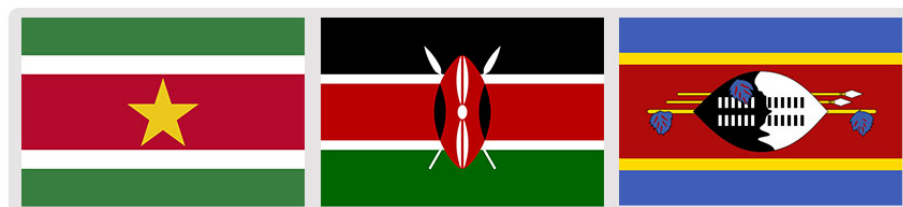


Flag of Botswana

Flag of Zambia

Flags with three horizontal stripes with an edging of the center line

The same group, but with a coat of arms or a symbol in the center has three flags: Suriname, Kenya and Swaziland.



Flag of Suriname

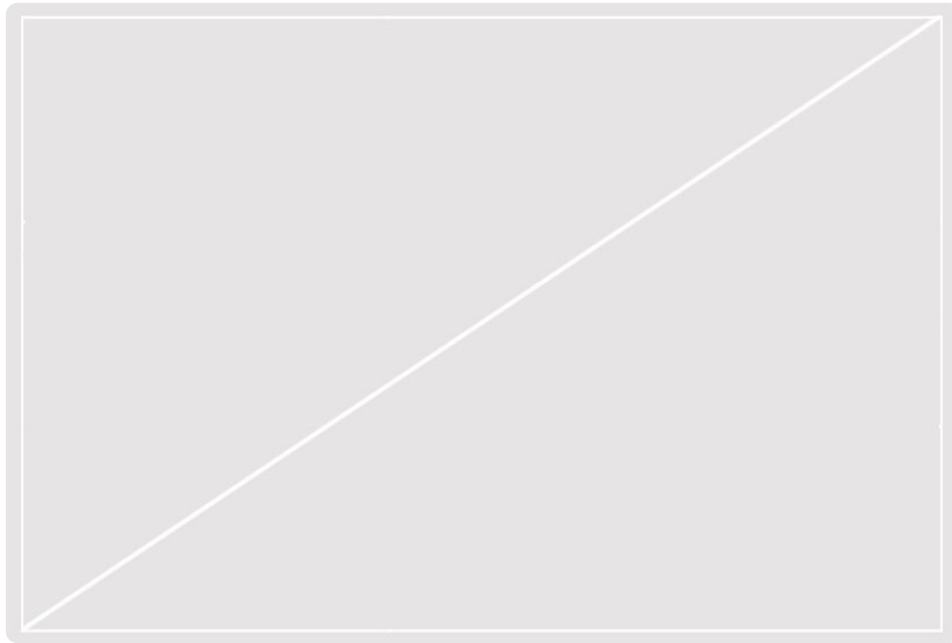
Flag of Kenya

Flag of Swaziland

Flags with three horizontal stripes with an edging of the center line and a symbol

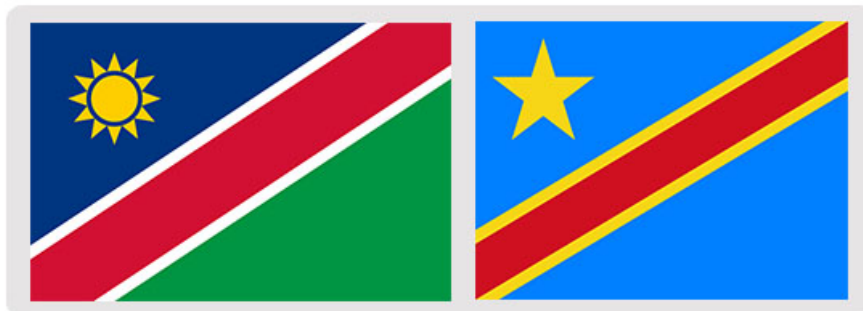
## The Diagonal Division

There are plenty of diagonal flags in the world. But it is difficult to identify a clear pattern, since each state has a different diagonal, but, nevertheless, certain patterns can be allocated.



The diagonal division pattern

The first subgroup includes two flags: flag of Namibia and of the DRC. Both diagonal stripes have an edging and a canton symbol.



Flag of Namibia

Flag of DRC

Flag with a diagonal division stripe with an edging and a symbol

There are quite many other diagonal flags — nine.



Flag of Bhutan

Flag of Papua — New Guinea



Flag of Saint Kitts and Nevis

Flag of Tanzania

Flag of Trinidad and Tobago



Flag of the Republic of the Congo

Flag of the Solomon Islands

Flag of the Marshall Islands

Flag of Brunei

Other flags with a diagonal division

## Relatively Symmetrical

Flags of this group are also unique and are put in this group in the absence of a pair, although certain similarities can be noted — flags are symmetric with respect to different axes or almost symmetrical.



Flag of Panama



Flag of Great Britain

Flag of Macedonia



Flag of Dominica

Flag of the Dominican Republic

Flag of Georgia



Flag of Burundi

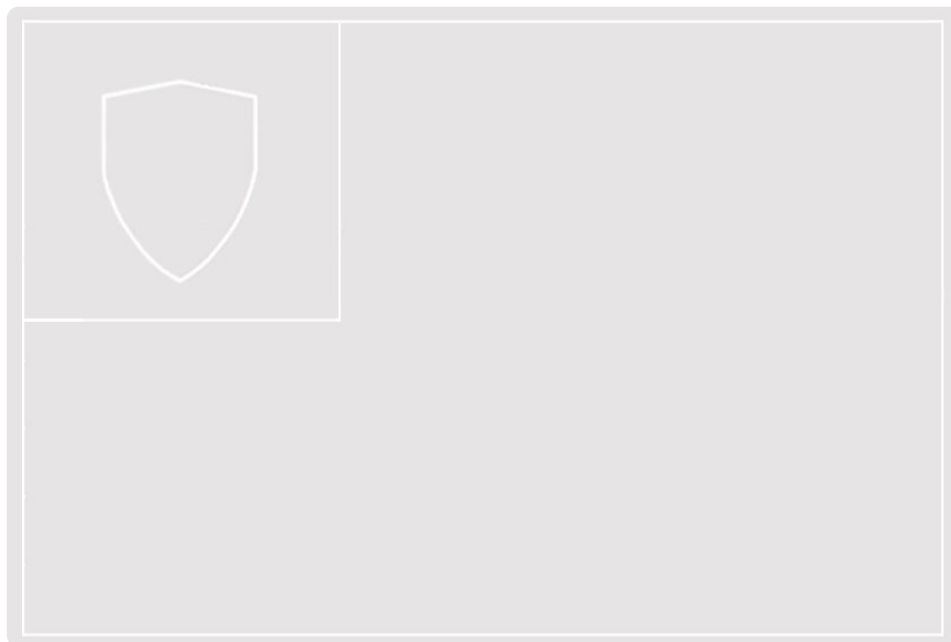
Flag of Grenada

Flag of Jamaica

Relatively symmetrical flags

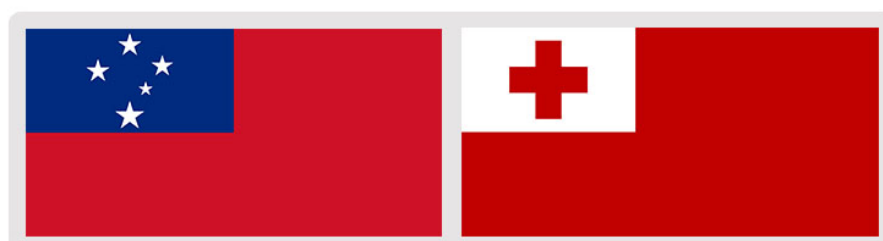
## Canton

Flags with a canton are also quite popular in the world.



Pattern of flags with a canton

A separate subgroup of Samoa and Tonga flags will be noted, which are completely monochrome except for the canton.



Flag of Samoa

Flag of Tonga

Monochrome flags with a canton

The next group is likely a result of a chance, rather than of a pattern. Because nine stripes on the flag of Uruguay represent nine regions and nine stripes on the flag of Greece, depending on different interpretations, symbolize the muses of arts and sciences or the syllables of the motto of Greece.



Flag of Uruguay

Flag of Greece

Striped flags with a canton

As for the rest, a canton is used quite often, usually denoting the former colonial past of the country.



Flag of Zambia



Flag of Chile



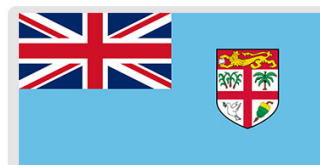
Flag of Togo



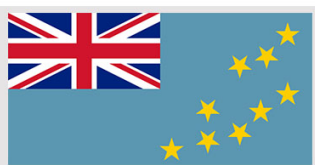
Flag of Australia



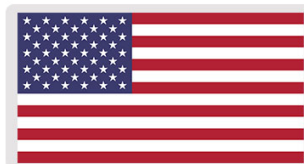
Flag of New Zealand



Flag of Fiji



Flag of Tuvalu



Flag of the USA



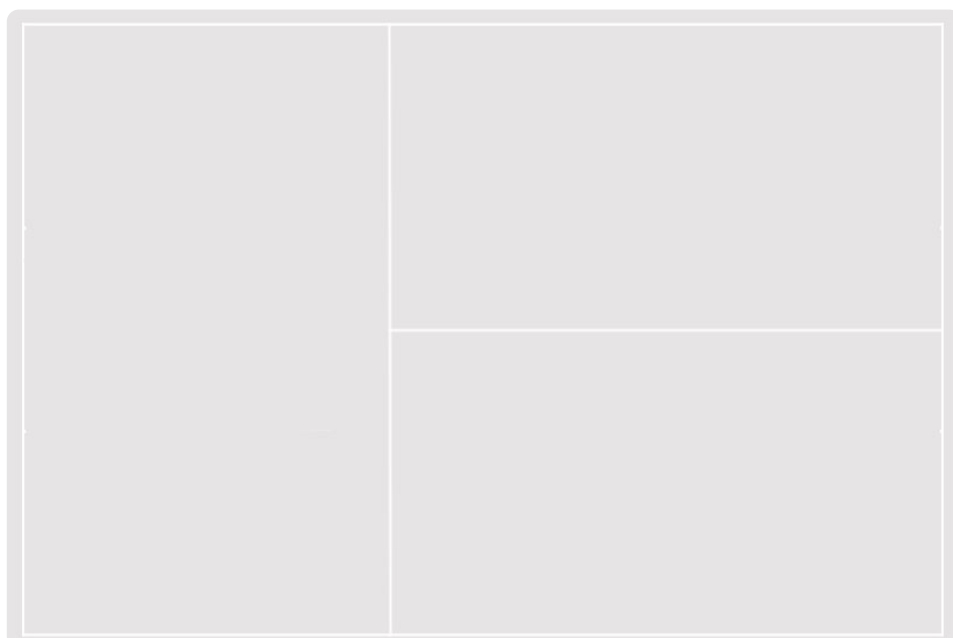
Flag of Malaysia



Flag of Liberia

Other flags with a canton

## Vertical Stripe at the Flagpole



Pattern of flags with a vertical stripe at the flagpole

This group of flags is not so numerous: flags of Guinea-Bissau, Benin and Madagascar.



Flag of Guinea-Bissau

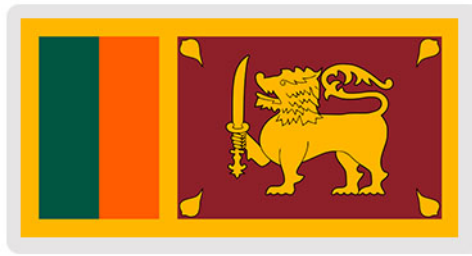


Flag of Benin

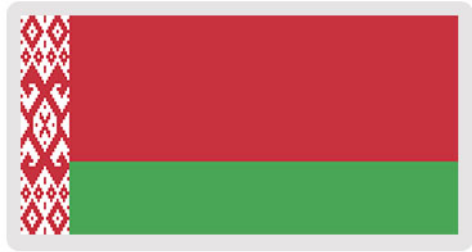
Flag of Madagascar

Vertical stripe at the flagpole

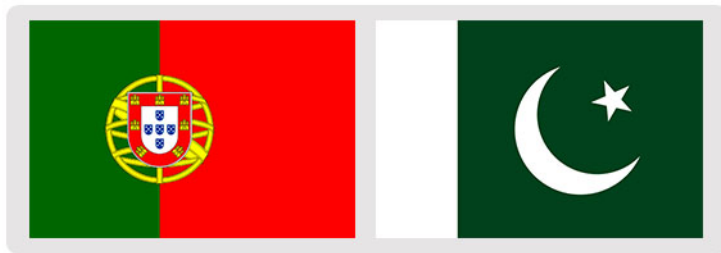
The remaining flags with a vertical stripe at the flagpole or closer to the flagpole are also quite unique. Among these are flags with a pattern at the flagpole: [flag of Belarus](http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en38-flag-of-belarus/) (<http://www.the-dialogue.com/en/en38-flag-of-belarus/>), Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan; flags that use a clean stripe: flag of Pakistan, Portugal, Oman and the United Arab Emirates; and the Sri Lankan flag which is difficult to categorize somehow.



Flag of Sri Lanka



Flag of the Belarus Republic



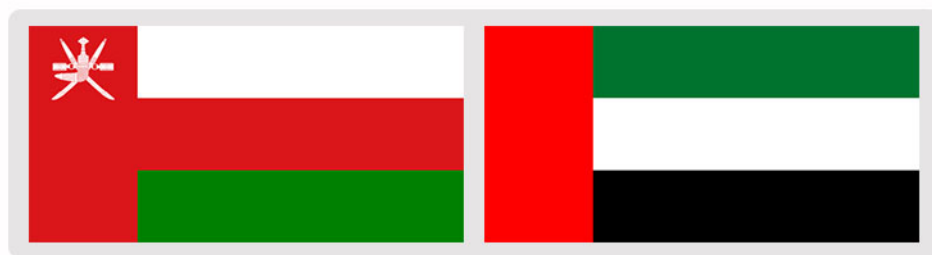
Flag of Portugal

Flag of Pakistan



Flag of Kazakhstan

Flag of Turkmenistan



Flag of Oman

Flag of the United Arab Emirates

Others with a vertical stripe at the flagpole

## The Scandinavian Cross

The Nordic group traditionally uses this type of division.





Scandinavian Cross pattern

This small group can be divided into two subgroups: the Scandinavian Cross and an inner Scandinavian Cross.

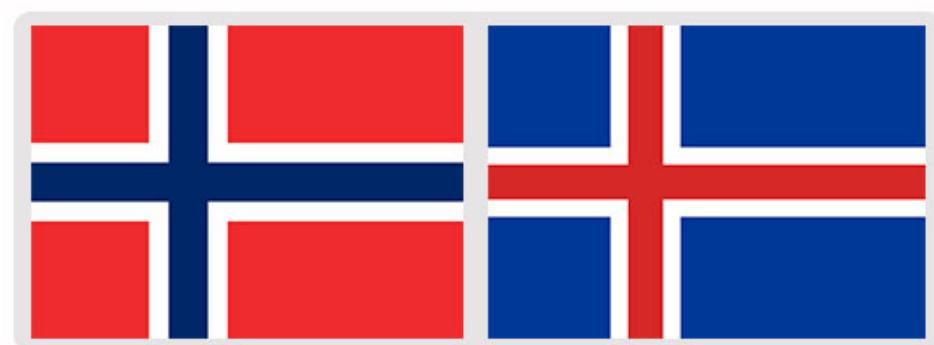


Flag of Finland

Flag of Sweden

Flag of Denmark

The Scandinavian Cross



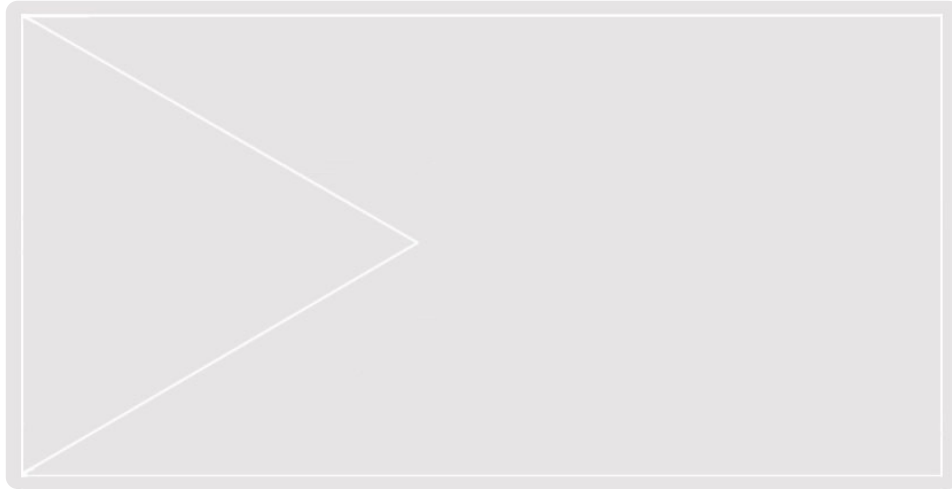
Flag of Norway

Flag of Iceland

The inner Scandinavian Cross

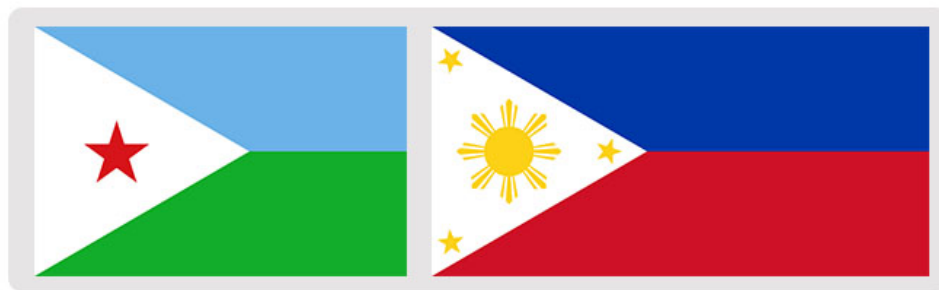
The cross of these flags symbolizes Christianity and its arrangement is probably due to the fact that the flags were hung not horizontally but vertically and they were much longer.

# Flags With a Separating Triangle



Pattern of flags with a separating triangle

There are also quite a lot of flags with a separating triangle. The first subgroup will include bicolours with a symbol on the triangle.



Flag of Djibouti

Flag of the Philippines

Bicolours with a symbol on the separating triangle

The next subgroup includes two Arab and one island states:



Flag of Palestine

Flag of Sudan

Flag of Bahamas

Tricolours with a separating triangle

A similar group includes: Mozambique, whose flag displays the Kalashnikov rifle; and a young state — South Sudan.



Flag of Mozambique

Flag of South Sudan

Tricolors with an edged central stripe and a symbol on the separating triangle

A significant number of flags use the separating triangle with a different arrangement of the elements and the number of stripes.



Flag of South Africa

Flag of Vanuatu

Flag of the Czech Republic



Flag of Sao Tome and Principe

Flag of Equatorial Guinea

Flag of Jordan



Flag of Zimbabwe

Flag of Cuba

Flag of Comoros



Flag of East Timor

Flag of Guyana

Flag of Eritrea

Other flags with a separating triangle

## Bicolors With a Triangles Division

This group has only two neighboring Arab states — Bahrain and Qatar.



Flag of Bahrain

Flag of Qatar

Bicolors with a triangles division

## Multicolor

In general, a large number of colors is typical for the African states: Mauritius, Central African Republic, Uganda. Also, five stripes are used by Thailand and Costa Rica.



Flag of Mauritius

Flag of the Central African Republic



Flag of Uganda

Flag of Thailand

Flag of Costa Rica

Multicolor

## Others With Angles

This group includes flags that do not fit other groups, but that have several angles in their division: Nepal, Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kuwait.



Flag of Nepal



Flag of Antigua and Barbuda

Flag of Seychelles

Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Flag of Kuwait

Others with angles

## Others

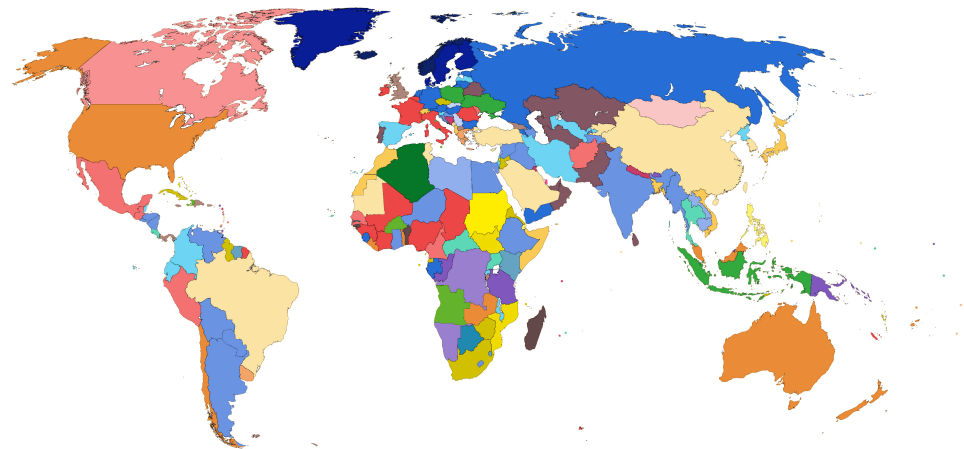
This group has flags with a horizontal division that is not common to other groups. The island states: Cape Verde, Nauru and Kiribati.



Others

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It is time to take a look at the map of the world flags and, perhaps, draw some personal conclusions:



World flags map