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OLD FLAGS, NEW MEANINGS

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INTRODUCTION

In flags, as in most forms of communication, context is everything. A flag may be seen by its designer as representing one group or set of values, but it may be understood very differently as other groups continue to use the flag. For example, the use of a Scottish flag over a government building conveys a message of officialdom, the same flag used by a member of the independence movement sends a political message, and when waved by a fan at a football match it represents support for the team. As flags' meanings change over time, so does the groups who use them. Both national and other types of flags have changed meaning.

Flags of political entities are intended to have enduring significance, as few governments are ever founded with the intention of ceasing to exist in the future. However, as the fortunes of nations wax and wane, flags may cease to have official recognition – but may live on in communities displaced or dissatisfied with the status quo. In other cases, such flags may be relegated to the political fringes by association with radical political movements whose strong views are distasteful to the mainstream and pollute the flag's meaning by association with "undesirable" elements of the population. A look at the evolving meaning of several flags will reveal both trends. In other cases, flags used by rebel groups that never were national symbols have been taken up by other groups many years later. If those groups achieve prominence in a nation's media, the original significance of the flag may be lost on most observers.

Susanne Reichl notes that flags are "polysemic signs" – that is, symbols to which a variety of meanings can be assigned. Because flags figure so large in the construction of national identity, they are often "de- and re-contextualised by various ideologies." To comprehend the processes by which users and viewers of flags convey and interpret the meaning of a flag, it is critical to examine the social and political milieu in which the flag is flown. A number of examples will serve to demonstrate this process of ideological re-assignment of meaning to flags. After discussion of those examples, an exploration of anthropological and sociological understandings of the roles of symbols in society will give a greater understanding of the process in generalised way.[1]

FORMER NATIONAL FLAGS USED AS ETHNIC FLAGS

There are numerous examples of former national flags being used as ethnic identity flags by populations in exile. In his book, *Flags of the World: A Pictorial History*, William Crampton cited the examples of pre-Soviet flags for the former Russian imperial possessions which had achieved a temporary measure of independence before they became part of the Soviet Union. Among these republics were the now-independent nations of Armenia, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine. During the Soviet era, anti-Soviet emigrant communities living in exile used the former national flags as symbols of their ethnic identities and desire for their homelands' independence.

In fact, because the United States never recognized the annexation of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), the US government acknowledged the pre-Soviet flags to be the official flags of those "occupied" countries. As a reaffirmation of the US position on the status of the Baltic States, the US State Department recommended that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) fly the pre-Soviet flags of those three countries in the official flight kit collection of flags carried aboard the Apollo 16 spacecraft when it flew to the moon in 1972. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the above-listed republics (as well as Azerbaijan and Belarus) formally adopted their pre-Soviet flags as the first flags of their newfound status as independent states. Since that time Azerbaijan has altered its flag slightly, while Belarus and Georgia have adopted new flags.[2]

There are other prominent examples besides those of the Soviet republics. Two of these are the flag of the Republic of Vietnam (frequently called South Vietnam) and the former flag used by Iran during the reign of the Shah. In the cases of both these flags, the exile communities use them as an ethnic identifier, as well as a form of protest against the governments in power in their former homelands.

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (1955-1975) / VIETNAMESE HERITAGE FLAG

Old Flag

The flag of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) held official status as a national flag from 1955 until the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975. It had a yellow field with three narrow red horizontal stripes running across the centre of the flag. Whitney Smith explains that the yellow field reflected the traditional imperial colour of Vietnam, while the three red stripes symbolized the three main regions of the country – Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-China. Following unification of the country at the end of the Vietnam War, the red flag with a yellow star of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) became the official flag in both the north and south of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.[3]

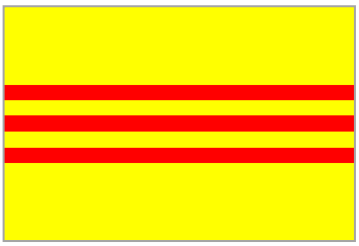


Figure 1. Flag of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in official use 1955-1975 (FOTW Flags of the World website).

New Meaning

One of the effects of the end of the war was a refugee crisis that lasted for over a decade, during which nearly 2 million Vietnamese fled the country and sought asylum abroad. More than half of the refugees resettled in the United States, with the remainder finding homes in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In many of their new home countries, the Vietnamese communities have continued to use the old flag of South Vietnam as a heritage flag. In the United States there have been numerous incidents where ethnically Vietnamese students have protested the use of the current Vietnamese flag in flag displays representing the origins of a school's students. They have requested that the flag of South Vietnam be used instead. Due to the lobbying efforts of Vietnamese Americans, the governments of 13 states, 15 counties, and 85 cities in 20 states have formally recognized the yellow flag with the red stripes as the flag of the Vietnamese American Community. As the Vietnamese Heritage Flag, the following meaning is assigned to the flag design: "The yellow background represents the ancestral land and the colour of the Vietnamese race. The yellow colour also represents earth symbolizing the territory and the national sovereignty. The red colour represents fire. The red colour is also the colour of the South and symbolizes a brave, un-submissive, heroic, and independent race in the south region, Vietnam, which is separated from the north region, China." [4]

An additional use of the flag in the United States is its association with the Vietnam War (1964-1973), in which the United States and its allies fought to prevent the forces of North Vietnam from seizing control of South Vietnam.

The flag (turned vertically and framed with narrow green stripes) formed the ribbon of the Vietnam Service Medal awarded to American military personnel who served in Vietnam and the other territories defined as the combat zone. A variation of this ribbon is also on the flag of the Vietnam Veterans of America organization. The flag is frequently displayed at war memorials and used by veterans of the conflict.[5]

Figure 3 Vietnam Service Medal (United States Armed Forces)(*Wikipedia*)

Figure 2. Ethnic Vietnamese in Canada display their flags during a commemoration of Vietnamese Black April (Tháng Tư Đen), on the 37th anniversary of the fall of Saigon (Source: *Wikipedia*

Figure 4: Vietnam Veterans on Guam display the flags of the USA, Guam, and South Vietnam. (Source: Vietnamese American Heritage Foundation *Flickr* site)

IRAN (1925-1979) /
PERSIAN OR IRANIAN HERITAGE FLAG

Another example of a former national flag now used as an ethnic identity flag is the flag of Iran, used during the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979).

Figure 5.

Flag of Iran during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) featuring the emblem with the lion bearing the sword of Ali, with the sunrise behind (Source: *FOTW Flags of the World* website).

Old Flag

The field design for the Iranian flag, a horizontal tricolour of green over white over red, dates back to the Constitution of 1905. It has been in use for over a century with changes in colour tint and in the central emblems during different periods in the political history of the country. During the reigns of the Shahs of the Pahlavi family the central emblem on the flag was a classical symbol of Persia – a lion bearing a sword with the rays of the sunrise behind. This emblem has been traced to at least the 13th century. In its earliest usage the lion and sun held astrological and religious meaning, but later it became associated with the Persian nation and the ruling dynasty. The lion bears the *Zulfiqar*, the legendary sword of Ali ibn Abi Talab, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed. This sword is a traditional symbol of Shia Islam.

Following the Islamic revolution of 1979, the nation replaced the Persian lion with a central emblem formed by stylized Arabic letters spelling the name "Allah." The emblem also represents the Koran, the Sword, the five pillars of Islam, and the concepts of balance, unity, neutrality, and the struggle to establish a unified society. In addition to the new central emblem, the phrase *Allah Akbar* (God is Great) is repeated 11 times at the border of each coloured stripe with the white stripe.[6]

New Meaning

In the years since the Islamic Revolution, the exile-community has continued to use the older flag as a representation of their Persian identity. The Persian Parade Committee in the United States adopted the flag with the provision that "the selection of this historical Flag as a national symbol should not be misconstrued as an endorsement by the Persian Parade of political organizations that have also adopted it as their symbols in the past few decades. The Flag does belong to ALL Iranian peoples."

They assigned the following meanings to the flag's colours and symbols:

Green: Appreciation of the beauty of Nature. Green is a sacred colour in Islam attributed to descendants of the Prophet (Mohammed). Green also relates to the Pir-e Sabz Zoroastrian pilgrimage site near Yazd.

White: Friendship, Reconciliation, Peace, Purity, passage from the material world, Zoroaster's favourite sacred colour

Red: Sacrifice, Revolution, martyrdom, tinkering and dynamic thinking safeguarding the country's and nation's "independence and integrity

Lion: Bravery, magnificence

Sun: Warmth, source of energy and life, continuity

Sword: Resistance, strength, triumph, resilience

This interpretation of the flag's symbolism provides a unifying symbol for Persians of all faiths living outside of their traditional homeland. Persians or Iranians (whichever name they chose to use) living abroad will continue to use this flag as a symbol of their ethnic identity regardless of the nature of the political regime in Iran.[7]

Figure 6. Persian-American women celebrating Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. The old Iranian flag can be seen behind them at left. (Source: US Department of State).

Figure 7. Persian-American family with American and Iranian flags (Source: *Europa Newswire*).

ETHIOPIA (1897 - 1974) / RASTAFARI FLAG

Old Flag

One of the most interesting examples of a repurposed national flag is that of the imperial Ethiopian flag that was in use until 1974. This flag has a field of three horizontal stripes in the traditional Ethiopian colours of green, yellow, and red (the original order was red, yellow, and green). Centred on the field is the emblem of the conquering Lion of Judah. The lion carries a flagstaff with a pennant of the same striped field, topped with a cross finial. According to tradition, the emperor of Ethiopia was the direct descendant of Solomon and Makeda, the Queen of Sheba, through her son, Menelik I. For this reason, the members of the dynasty held the title "the Lion of Judah" and were represented by the emblem of the ancient Jewish tribe of Judah bearing a royal crown. When Haile Selassie I (1892-1975), the last emperor of Ethiopia, was deposed in 1974 the royal arms were dropped from the national flag, but the striped field has been used to this day. The meanings of the colours have varied over time. Whitney Smith said, "Red is seen as the colour of strength, the blood of patriots, or faith. Yellow is for the church, peace, natural wealth, or love. Green is seen as a symbol of the land or hope." Alfred Znamierowski noted that "in the present official symbolism, the green represents fertility, labour and development; the yellow, hope, justice and equality, and the red, sacrifice and heroism in the cause of freedom and equality." It is also important to note the legacy of the Ethiopian flag as the basis (with the addition of the colour black) for the Pan-African colours that, in various configurations, have been used on the national flags of 18 different African countries – or a third of the total number.[8]

Figure 8. Imperial flag of Ethiopia used until 1974. (Source: *Flags of the World – FOTW* website)

New Meanings

In the current era, one is more likely to see the imperial Ethiopian flag used as a symbol of the Rastafari movement. This religion has roots in Jamaica and a prophecy attributed to Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Garvey promoted the idea of the descendants of the African diaspora returning to the continent of their ancestors where they would rebuild a great civilization. Exact wording of the prophecy varies, as he repeated it many times throughout his speeches, but it is usually something similar to: "Look to Africa, when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is at hand!" For the Rastafarians, this prophecy was fulfilled with the coronation of Ras (meaning "prince") Tafari as Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930.

Members of the faith consider Haile Selassie to be the returned Messiah, and Garvey as the reincarnation of John the Baptist. To them, the flag is a now a religious symbol and it has been adopted as their own.

As one Rastafari explained it on his website,

> *The lion of Judah is depicted on the Ethiopian flag. But what does this Lion really mean? The lion is actually a representation of King Selassie I him Self. King Selassie I is the great lion of Judah. King Selassie's title at his crowning November 2nd 1930, was "King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah, Elect of God." Oh King Selassie I, and I love you.*[9]

Variants of the flag are also popular symbols associated with elements of Rastafarian culture. For example, it is often used as a reggae flag with a more stylized lion or the face of Bob Marley (1945-1981) replacing the imperial emblem. Likewise, it is also a popular flag associated with cannabis use because the Rastafari use "ganja," or marijuana, in their rituals. For this reason, you can also find flags with a marijuana leaf used as the central symbol on the flag. Members of the Rastafari movement often wear colourful caps with variations of the Pan-African colours. Within the context of their religion, the symbolism associated with the colours is explained this way: "Red is said to signify the blood of martyrs, green the vegetation and beauty of Ethiopia, and gold the wealth of Africa." Black, when combined with the Ethiopian colours, represents the people of Africa and the African diaspora. In various flags associated with Rastafarianism, the order of the colours is reversed from those found on the current Ethiopian flag, or the stripes are vertical instead of horizontal. [10]

Figure 9. Bob Marley emblem showing the Rastafarian flag with the Lion of Judah. (Source: ultimemusic.com)

FORMER NATIONAL FLAGS USED IN THE ARAB SPRING

The "Arab Spring" is the popular name for a series of uprisings in the Arab world that began on 18 December 2010 in Tunisia. As the uprisings spread from country to country we witnessed citizens of the different nations using national flags for their own purposes. In some countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, the flags waved by the demonstrators were the current national flags. In the case of these nations, it was evident that the citizenry associated the flag with their country, rather than with the regime against which they were protesting. However, in other countries where the flag was seen a symbol of the ruling party rather than of the people, other flags were used. In both Libya and Syria, many protestors adopted obsolete national flags to represent their causes.

LIBYA (1959-1961) / LIBYAN REVOLUTION (2011)
LIBYA (2011-PRESENT)

Old Flag

In the Constitution of 1951, the first flag of the independent Kingdom of Libya incorporated the pan-Arab colours used during the Arab Revolt, and citing lines of the 14th century Iraqi poet Safi al-Din al-Hilli: *Our deeds are the colour of white, our battles of black, our meadows of green and our swords of red…*

Figure 10 Reintroduced after the Libyan Revolution of 2011. (Source: *Flags of the World – FOTW* website)

The Crescent is symbolic of the beginning of the lunar month according to the Muslim calendar. It brings back to our minds the story of the *Hijra* (migration) of our prophet Mohammed from his home in order to spread Islam and teach the principles of right and virtue. The Star represents our smiling hope, the beauty of aim and object and the light of our belief in God, in our country, its dignity and honour which illuminate our way and puts an end to darkness.

The flag was in use until 1969, when a military coup led by Muammar Gaddafi (1942-2011) ousted King Idris (1889-1983), and proclaimed a new socialist state. Gaddafi ruled the dictatorship until the revolution of 2011 and his death at the hands of rebels in October that year. From 1977-2011, the flag of Libya was solid green with no insignia. Green is the traditional colour of Islam, as well as representing Gaddafi's Green Revolution.[11]

New Meaning

The message sent by the re-use of the old flag during the Libyan Revolution was clear – the demonstrators and armed rebels intended to drive Muammar Gaddafi from power. Usage of the old flag over the solid green flag of the Gaddafi regime signalled a rejection of everything that Gaddafi stood for. The flags were a common sight in news footage and photographs taken during the uprising. They were carried by protestors, displayed on the vehicles used by the rebels, and even worn as headscarves by women who participated in the demonstrations. Following the death of Gaddafi, the flag was adopted as the new national flag of Libya.[12]

Figure 11 Demonstrators display the pre-Gaddafi flag of Libya during the revolution of 2011.
(Source: *Comment Middle East* website)

SYRIA (1932-1958, 1961-1963) / SYRIAN REVOLUTIONARY COMMAN COUNCIL

Old Flag

Most of the flags used in Syria since the end of Ottoman rule have also drawn upon the Pan-Arab colours. Of these, one flag that was distinctly Syrian was that used from 1932-1958 and from 1961-1963. The field of the flag consisted of three horizontal stripes of green over white over black. Centred in the white stripe were three red stars. The colours green, white, and black represent the Rashid, Umayyad, and Abassid dynasties that ruled the country in the past. Some sources say that the stars are symbolic of Arab revolutions, while others say that they represent Damascus, Aleppo, and Deir ez-Zor / Dayr az Zawr.[13]

Figure 12 The flag of Syria from 1932-58 and 1961-63
(Source: *Flags of the World – FOTW* website)

As with the Libyan Revolution, the rejection of the current flag by the rebels signals a rejection of the dictator and the symbols associated with his regime. In the case of the Syrian Civil War, however, the large number of rebel groups and their conflicting loyalties and goals complicates the situation. The former flag is the banner for the 72 factions allied under the leadership of the Syrian Revolutionary Command Council (SRCC). However, there are other factions unaffiliated with the SRCC that use a variety of other flags to represent themselves. Only time will tell if this alliance will eventually be victorious and if the flag will once again fly over a unified Syria. Until that time, it remains a common symbol used to unite a variety of groups opposed to the regime of President Bashar al-Assad (1965-).[14]

Figure 13 Syrian Kurds in London show their support for the Syrian rebels
(Source: *LA Times*)

TEXAS

"Come and Take It" Flag / "Open Carry" Flag

Old Flag

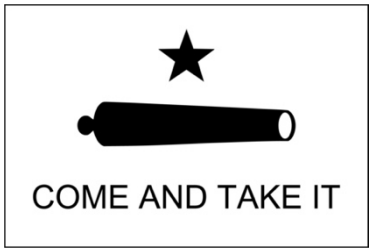


Figure 14 "Come and Take It" flag used by Texans at the Battle of Gonzales in 1835. (Source: *Wikipedia*)

An example of a lesser-known flag used for a new purpose is the "Come and Take It" flag from the Texas Revolution. The phrase "Come and Take It" has ties back to the American Revolution, when Colonial soldiers defending Fort Morris in the colony of Georgia used it. When the British demanded that they surrender the fort, the commander of the outnumbered Americans replied, "Come and take it." Within the context of the Texas Revolution, the phrase is associated with the small town of Gonzales in south-eastern Texas. The town had borrowed a small cannon from the Mexican garrison in San Antonio to use as a defence against attacks by American Indian tribes. As the movement for Texas independence grew, the Mexicans demanded the return of the cannon. In defiance, the Texans hoisted a flag with a small cannon topped by a single black star. Writing below the emblem said, "Come and Take It". After a short battle in which the Texans fired the cannon, the Mexicans retreated and left the cannon in Gonzales. For Texans, this is an important flag as it represents the first battle in their struggle for independence from Mexico.[15]

New Meanings

The "Come and Take It" flag has now become a symbol of the Open Carry movement in Texas. This group opposes all forms of gun control and contends that, under the 2nd amendment to the United States Constitution, they have the right to openly carry any weapons in public. In demonstrations, group members frequently use a variety of flags including the original "Come and Take It" flag, as well as a variant design on which they have substituted an automatic rifle for the cannon. When used within the context of the gun control debate in America, the old flag from the Texas Revolution has become a symbol of a small movement that advocates for the right to carry all weapons openly. When the automatic rifle is substituted for the cannon, the flag appears to present a new challenge to authorities to "come and take their weapons."[16]

Figure 15. Open Carry activist displaying his weapon and the traditional "Come and Take It" flag. (Source: *Fortress America* website)

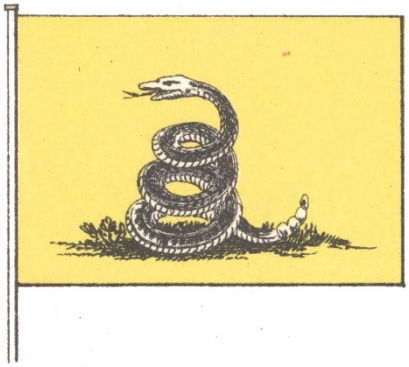
Figure 16. Large variant of the "Come and Take It" flag with an automatic rifle. (Source: *Houston Chronicle*)

GADSDEN FLAG / TEA PARTY FLAG

Old Flag

During the American Revolutionary War, rattlesnakes were a popular motif before the Stars and Stripes became the standard for flags of "Patriot" military formations. It was particularly popular in the South, and the snake was sometimes accompanied by the motto "Don't Tread On Me." The symbolism of the snake spoke to the Patriots' self-conception – as the rattlesnake lies quietly until molested by a human, but then strikes with deadly venom, so did the militia members live peacefully until provoked by British governmental abuses.[17]

Popular memory has preserved a striped rattlesnake flag as the first Naval Jack of the United States, but Peter Ansoff has demonstrated that is merely "flag lore." One of the best-known sources of that flag lore, George Henry Preble, also recorded that Col. Christopher Gadsden (1724-1805) of South Carolina designed a flag, intended for the navy, "being a yellow flag with a lively representation of a rattlesnake in the middle in the attitude of going to strike, and these words underneath, 'Don't Tread On Me.'" As Preble records no use of the flag, it seems that his inclusion of the flag in his history reintroduced it to the American public. For many years it served as one of many historical flags used to evoke patriotic sentiment. It may have seen widespread reproduction during the celebration of the Bicentennial of American independence in 1976. One of the authors recalls a gentleman from his small hometown in Michigan carrying a Gadsden flag in each 4th of July parade during his youth. Some US Marines learn through oral tradition that it was a historical flag of the Marine Corps.[18]



Figures 17-18.

Left: Preble's rendition of the Gadsden flag. (Source: Preble, 1882).

Right: Modern depiction of the flag. (Source: *Wikipedia*)

New Meaning

The Gadsden flag had mostly historical associations until recently, when activists affiliated with a political movement called the Tea Party began displaying it at rallies. The Tea Party is not a formal political organization but rather is a loose group of activists advocating for an imprecisely defined agenda that corresponds to what many "conservative" politicians also claim to favour. Examples include lower taxes, less regulation of business operations and of handguns, and resistance to the Affordable Care Act, popularly called Obamacare. While not affiliated with the Republican Party, Tea Party activists have been influential in Republican Party primary elections, leading to the nomination of candidates who self-proclaim affiliation with the Tea Party movement.[19]

"Tea" is sometimes said to be an acronym for "Taxed Enough Already," but the name also hearkens back to an event of the American Revolution called the Boston Tea Party. To protest a government-created monopoly on tea that amounted to a tax, on December 16, 1773, activists boarded ships of the East India Company in Boston Harbour and dumped all the tea overboard.[20]

Tea Party rallies usually feature a number of people dressed in late 18th-century clothing – evoking the Revolutionary generation and asserting that the modern Tea Party political agenda is in the same spirit as that of the Founding Fathers. A number of Revolutionary-era flags are also flown at Tea Party rallies, but the Gadsden flag has become most associated with them. The rattlesnake motif has clear resonances with the Tea Party's anti-government rhetoric, and the choice of the Gadsden flag over other rattlesnake flags may be related to the Navy's claim on the striped flag as one of the jacks currently in use, and to the ease of purchasing a Gadsden flag replica from most dealers.

Figure 19 Tea Party rally with Gadsden flag. (Source: Front page *Mag* website)

Because the Tea Party has been so visible in the American media since 2009, many observers who paid little heed to the Gadsden flag as a historical commemorative now associate it with right-wing politics. As such, some officials who wish to retain the appearance of neutrality have declined to allow the Gadsden flag even as a display of a historical flag. The most notorious recent use of the Gadsden flag occurred in the summer of 2014, when a married couple murdered two police officers in Las Vegas and draped the corpses in a Gadsden flag. Witnesses reported that the killers had been active in Tea Party protests.[21]

RE-PURPOSED FLAGS IN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

Fifteen new countries emerged from the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. For the people of the Russian Federation, the breakup signalled a decline in global prestige and a loss of their "superpower" status. For the other countries, their newfound independence triggered a desire to assert their own ethnic identities and free themselves from the Russian domination of the Soviet era. These post-Soviet realities have prompted the reuse of multiple flags that had been repressed in favour of the hammer and sickle. The newly independent countries of the European part of the old USSR revived their pre-Soviet flags, while the Russian Federation returned to the white-blue-red flag of the tsarist era. These regions have also seen the revival of other flags that have been repurposed to give them new meanings. Two examples come from Russia and Ukraine. While there are many other examples of flag appropriation from these two countries, the two discussed here are most commonly used to convey new meanings.

RUSSIA, 1858-1883 / RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS AND MONARCHISTS

Old Flag

One of the most unusual flag episodes from the history of the Russian Empire involved the introduction of a tricolour flag based upon the colours of the imperial coat of arms. In 1858, following a heraldic study that determined that the national colours should properly be based upon the arms, Emperor Alexander II (1818-1881) issued a decree establishing the "heraldic national flag". On the flag, black represented the Russian two-headed eagle, yellow (or gold) was the field colour on the arms, and white (or silver) came from the horse ridden by St. George, the patron saint of Russia. In some versions of the flag, the yellow stripe is shown as orange.

Figure 20 The civil flag of the Russian Empire, 1858 – 1883. (Source: *Flags of the World – FOTW* website)

The intent was not for the flag to be a replacement for the white-blue-red tricolour that had been in use since the days of Peter the Great (1672-1725). Rather, it was meant to provide a civil flag for unrestricted use on land. In reality, the new flag was little known among the populace and was often displayed up-side-down due to its lack of use. Most Russians preferred the more familiar flag that had been used for centuries to represent their country. After several decades in which Russia appeared to have two flags, Emperor Alexander III (1845-1894) reversed the decision in 1883 and decreed that the white-blue-red flag be used as the exclusive national flag of the Russian Empire.[22]

New Meaning

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation resumed using the traditional white-blue-red tricolour. In post-Soviet Russia numerous interest groups have competed for a share of political power, including communists, monarchists, and ultranationalists. For the communists, the former Soviet flag is the preferred symbol. Monarchists and nationalists often use what they call the "Romanov" flag of Russia, with the former typically using a version that includes the imperial arms. The nationalists consider Peter the Great's tricolour to be foreign since the tsar based his new flag on the flag of the Netherlands. For them, the imperial flag represents a flag that is truly Russian and uncontaminated by western influence.

In the Russian language, two words correspond to the adjective "Russian" in English. The work "*russkii*" refers to ethnic Russians, while "*rossiiskii*" means anyone who is a citizen of the Russian Federation. This is not just a linguistic distinction; it is the very root of Russian nationalism. It is also important to note that the word "*natsionalist*" implies not just Russian pride, but a point of view at the extreme right of the political spectrum. Russian nationalists believe that Russia was at its highest point of status when it held an expansive empire. They consider that all ethnic Russians, regardless of their country of residence, are the heirs of this empire. The nationalists not only think that Russia should intervene on the part of their brethren in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, and Eastern Ukraine; they support efforts to expand the Russian state, especially into the Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine.

One example of the nationalist preference for the Romanov flag was a motion in 2014 by Mikhail Degtyaryov, a deputy from the LDPR (formerly called the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia), to change the national flag to the black-yellow-white tricolour.

He explained his motivation:

We were achieving brilliant victories when we used the imperial flag and today it is still capable of uniting all Russian citizens. The modern tricolour, returned by Boris Yeltsin in a rush, has never been discussed with the people, no research has been made. In the early 1990s all decisions in our country were dictated by US advisors… We need people to think more about the flag that is flying over Russia. We must return the state flag that matches the resurrecting glory of our nation.

The ultra-nationalists have seized this flag as their own. Ironically, one of the vocal critics of the flag change proposal was Anton Bakovtold, the leader of the Monarchist Party, even though his party also uses the flag. "How can Russia use the Romanov dynasty flag before the descendants of the emperors return to their homeland? The Tsars got the Kremlin stolen from them, and the Hermitage Palace. Now the LDPR deputy wants to steal their flag." While the change never made it through parliament, this flag is frequently used at marches involving nationalists or monarchists. It has also been a common sight in the Russian-speaking regions of Eastern Ukraine where Russian-backed rebels are seeking to break away from the Ukrainian state.[23]

Figure 21 Russian nationalists carry the imperial flag in an opposition march in Moscow in 2012 (Source: *RT* website)

UKRAINIAN INSURGENT ARMY / UKRAINIAN NATIONALISTS

Old Flag

Figure 22 Flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (Source: *Wikipedia*)

The flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UIA) was a horizontal bicolour of red and black. Symbolism of the colours tells a simple story – Ukrainian blood spilled on the black earth of the homeland. The story of the UIA is complicated. Essentially, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was a Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary group whose chief goal was to secure independence for Ukraine. The group emerged from the chaos of World War II on 14 October 1942.

During its period of activity (1942-1956) members of the group engaged in combat against forces from Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, the Polish resistance in WWII, and the post-war communist government of Poland. During the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, the UIA both fought against and occasionally cooperated with German forces in their struggle against Soviet troops. For this reason, after the war the Soviet government labelled them as "collaborators" and "fascists". In the post-war years the Soviets continued to battle the UIA until it was essentially eliminated as a threat to the Soviet state.[24]

New Meaning

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine once again became an independent country. The country has a complicated ethnic and linguistic composition that has led to the emergence of significant divisions among the population. Ethnically, 77.8% of the population are Ukrainian, 17.3% are Russian, and 4.9% are from other ethnic groups. The state language is Ukrainian with 67.5% of the population considering it as their native language. However, 29.6% have declared Russian to be their native language. Linguistically, the country is

essentially divided by language use. Ukrainian is the primary language in the western part of the country, the central regions are basically bilingual with Ukrainian and Russian spoken regardless of ethnicity, and in the east and south Russian is the dominant language. In the Western regions, Ukrainian nationalism and anti-Russian sentiments are high. This situation has only increased as the Russians have annexed Crimea and supported Russian separatists in the eastern part of the country.

Depending upon the ethnic and political affiliation of the viewer, use of the red and black flag of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army sends different messages. For Ukrainian nationalists, it signals a desire for an independent Ukraine in which ethnic Ukrainians would be the dominant force. Further, it declares an opposition to foreign influence in Ukraine, especially interference from the Russian Federation. To ethnic Russians and even to some ethnic Ukrainian veterans of World War II, however, the flag is considered to be a fascist symbol. The legacy of the official Soviet perception of the UIA as Nazi collaborators taints the flag and prompts fears of fascism.[25]

Figure 23. Demonstrators in Kiev celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in 2012. Other flags in the image include the Ukrainian national flag and the flag of the *Svoboda* (Freedom) party.

(Source: *KyivPost* website)

ENGLAND – ST. GEORGE'S FLAG / ENGLISH NATIONALISM AND ENGLISH FOOTBALL FANDOM

Old Flag

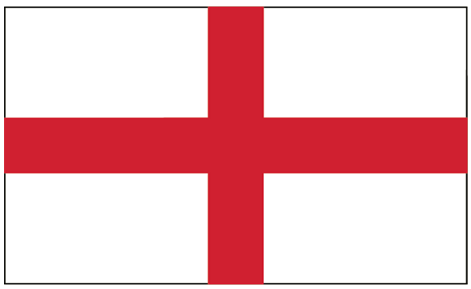


Figure 24 English flag with the cross of St. George. (Source: *Wikipedia*)

One of the oldest flags in the world is almost certainly the oldest appropriation of one people's symbol to serve as another nation's emblem. St. George has been the patron saint of England since the Middle Ages, and his red cross on a white flag can be traced to the 15th century. Strangely enough, George probably never heard of England, and may never have existed at all.

St. George, according to legend, was a knight of Cappadocia in what is now eastern Turkey. In the time of Diocletian (284-305 A.D.), he was travelling in Libya when he encountered a village being terrorized by a dragon. He famously killed the dragon and had other adventures before being martyred. As early as 494, Pope Gelasius (492 - 496) came to doubt the veracity of George's story, and he remained a little-known saint until the Crusades. During the First Crusade, Godfrey of Boulogne is said to have been assisted by the Cappadocian saint, and when the English King Richard I (1157-1199) ventured to Palestine in 1191, the Lion-Hearted monarch, and by extension his soldiers and vassals, also offered veneration to George. By 1222, his feast was celebrated in England, and in 1415 he was proclaimed the patron saint of England, displacing Edward the Confessor.[26]

His banner was initially associated with the English King in his capacity as military leader and, in the 16th century it was commonly seen in paintings of the English army. To the extent that the nation of England had a flag, it was the cross of St. George. For many years, however, the flag of England was little-used. After the Act of Union in 1707, England, Wales, and Scotland became a single political entity, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and in 1801 Ireland was added to the Kingdom. Through the great struggles of the Napoleonic Wars and the First and Second World Wars, soldiers fought under versions of the Union Flag combining the crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and (after 1801) St. Patrick. During this period, many English people made little distinction between being English and being British.

Popular culture encouraged remembrance of a common past in which, as Linda E. Connors and Mary Lu MacDonald note, "The evolution of the parliamentary system, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Britain's industrial and commercial advances, her status as a world power, and… her military victories, all were part of a proud past shared by all Britons." The flag that symbolized England to Englishmen and Englishwomen was the Union Flag.[27]

In the British political system, there remained few things that were distinctly English in governance. One was the Church of England – the Church of Scotland remained entirely outside the purview of the Archbishop of Canterbury. And St. George's cross has continued to fly outside Anglican churches.

The other, curiously enough, was sport. Although in the Olympics there is a British team, in most other sports, each of the countries of the United Kingdom has its own team. For some years, this did not affect the association of the Union Flag with England, however; consider this programme for England's championship World Cup team in 1966.

Figure 25. Programme for England's championship World Cup team (1966). (Source: *Gavel & Grand* website)

New Meaning

As the demographics of Britain changed through immigration of people from Commonwealth countries including the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies, the coterminous identity of Englishness and Britishness began to shift. Politically, the devolution of local power to Welsh, Scottish, and Northern Irish assemblies has given rise to the West Lothian question – why are Scottish Members of Parliament (MPs) allowed to vote on matters of internal English government, but the reverse is not true? Culturally, there has been a rise in celebrations of English ethnicity, such as St. George's Day fêtes.[28]

The assertion of Englishness separate from Britishness – and the display of St. George's Cross for the purpose – began among right-wing, lower-class groups, such as the British National Party, who also used the Union Flag. Nonetheless, because the St. George's cross flag was not commonly used elsewhere, it came to be associated with anti-immigrant, racist attitudes. As Kate Fox notes, "the flag was only available for appropriation by extremists in the first place because the rest of the population had shunned it." [29]

Figure 26. Programme for the English World Cup team (2014). (Source: *http://9schedule.com*)

In the 1990s, a different yet also distinctive use of St. George's cross arose – as a banner for supporters of the English football team. Michael McCarthy notes it was first recorded when England played Scotland in the World Cup in 1996, and a Union Flag would have done little to show which side was being supported. Coming during a period of resurgence of English identity and flag-flying, the use of St. George's cross by football fans caught on and is now deeply embedded in football culture, as witnessed by the programme for the English World Cup team in 2014.[30]

Today, many middle-class English people are reluctant to fly St. George's cross, associating it both with racist politics and "football fans and lager louts." However, there are those, such as radical leftist folk singer Billy Bragg (1957-), who are flying St. George's cross and proclaiming it as a symbol of English political traditions of trade unionism and social welfare. Bragg says, "It's time to repossess our national symbols." [31]

CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG / SOUTHERN PRIDE FLAG AND WHITE SUPREMACIST FLAG

Old Flag

The Confederate Battle Flag was first flown as a military banner for certain units within the Confederate States Army during the United States Civil War from 1861-1865. By the end of the war, it had become a widely-accepted symbol of the entire Confederate cause. This sectional conflict between northern states who fought to retain the union with all its states, and southern states who wished to break away and form a new nation, was motivated by questions around the extent to which the federal government could place limitations on the practice of slavery. The seceding states had by far the largest number of slaves within their borders, and those slaves were uniformly descended from African people who had been transported to the New World in chains. To unfairly summarize a complex set of constitutional disputes, the southern states seceded to protect their ability to practice slavery as they saw fit.

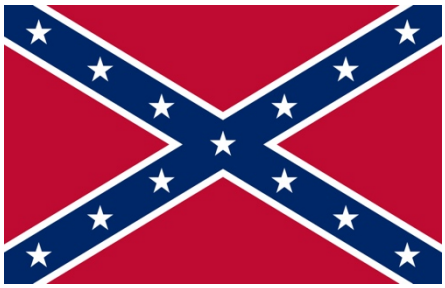


Figure 27. Rectangular version of the Confederate Battle Flag (Source: *Wikipedia*)

Even during the war, as Robert Bonner has demonstrated, white southerners invested the Battle Flag with the same nationalistic totem power as northerners gave to the Stars and Stripes. For a brief period following the Union victory and emancipation of the former slaves, African Americans enjoyed the protection of federal troops and actively participated in the political life of the South, but by 1890 the troops had been withdrawn and white political leaders had successfully disfranchised most African Americans and begun enacting legislation to strictly segregate the races in public accommodations.

Karen Cox writes that this legal shift was accompanied by a cultural shift, in which for nearly half a century the white children of the South were inculcated with not only a moral revulsion against social intercourse with African Americans, but a reverence for the heroes and symbols of the Confederacy. Battle flags were posted in schoolrooms near the portraits of generals such as Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) and Stonewall Jackson (1824-1863), and flown near the newly erected Confederate soldier memorials that were springing up throughout the South between 1890 and 1920. In the new interpretation, the Confederate flag symbolized not just a defeated national cause, but a code of ethics which allowed white Southerners to valorise racial separation and preservation of white supremacy not merely as political expedients but as moral virtues. Rhetorically, the cause was cloaked in language referring to the Southern soldier's courage in battle and defence of deeply-held constitutional principles.[32]

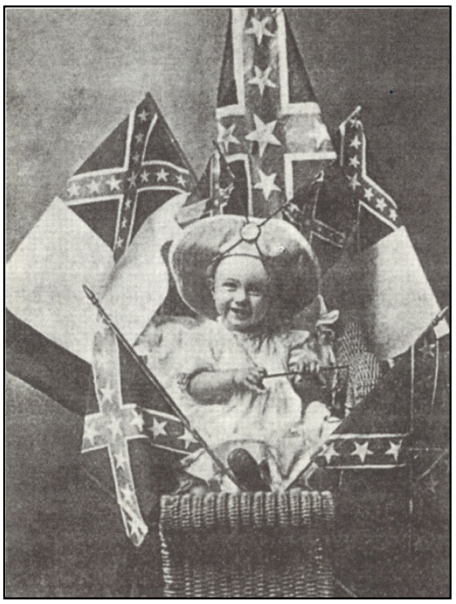


Figure 28. Child with Confederate Flags (Source: Cox: *Dixie's Daughters. P. 120*)

The Confederate flag, then, was held in reverence throughout the South and even given respect at Civil War battlefields in the North. White supremacy was a largely uncontroversial tenet of mainstream American culture, South and North.

New Meaning

John Coski has traced the evolution of the Confederate flag through the twentieth century. In many cases, it has retained its association with the values of the Confederate army – namely, violence in the name of white supremacy. However, as those values have become less and less accepted, the flag itself has become marginalized in many quarters. On the other hand, many who continue to revere the flag have attempted to disassociate it with racial aspects, instead claiming for it a representation of the martial values of personal honour and heroism.[33]

Challenges to segregation occurred throughout the twentieth century, but for a decade between 1954 and 1965 a string of court rulings and mass protests by mostly African-American activists led to a wholesale change in the law, and in mainstream opinion. Those whites who resisted the changes often rallied under the Confederate flag, as groups

such as the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Council embraced the rebel flag in their iconography. In many cases, state governments embraced the Confederate flag within their official protocol as an act of defiance against Federal mandates for desegregation.

Figure 29. Members of the Ku Klux Klan with the Confederate Flag (Source: Mississippi Valley Collection, University of Memphis Libraries).

Figure 30. Button for the Citizens' Councils. (Source: *Old Politicals Auctions* website)

As racism moved into the realm of the socially unacceptable for most Americans, many began to associate the Confederate flag with its least savoury proponents. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a leading civil rights group, calls the Confederate flag "the ugly symbol of idiotic white supremacy, racism, and denigration." That point of view has largely prevailed, as the Confederate flag has been removed from the iconography of most state governments.[34]

There do remain those who disclaim racism as a motivation for flying the Confederate flag. For example, South Carolina legislator Pat Harris wrote that, "The flag is not a symbol of slavery and never was… Love of their land and pride of ownership brought [southerners together] under this flag to repel any invader from their lands… Devotion, not slavery, sent those men off to battle under this flag… Bravery, not slavery, is what this flag symbolizes." But those who make this claim must fight the widely-held perception that it is, in fact, a flag of racism – hence the many images of the flag proclaiming, "Heritage Not Hate." [35]

Figure 31. Graphic with Confederate Battle Flag and the motto "Heritage, Not Hate"
(Source: *Soda Head* website)

Finally, there is also a streak of what Michael Prince calls "a strong dose of [Southern] cussedness." Coski witnessed the Confederate flag being flown frequently in Eastern Europe shortly after the collapse of the Iron Curtain. His correspondents linked the symbol less to a specific regional history and more to the spirit of rebellion against authority. This can also be seen in commercially produced flags that combine the Confederate Battle Flag with the Gadsden Flag. Even in the North, where local memory honours the valour of those who fought to suppress the Confederacy, rebel flags are sometimes seen. Knowing that the mainstream, North and South, frowns upon the Confederate flag is enough to motivate some free-spirited souls to wave the Southern Cross – regardless of the feelings of their African-American neighbors.[36]

Figure 32. Variant fag incorporating elements from the Gadsden (Tea Party) flag onto the Confederate Battle Flag.

Figures 33-34. Left: Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirt featuring the Confederate Battle Flag. (Source: *Rock.com* website) Right: Image of the band performing in front of the flag. (Source: *Civil War Memory* website)

A recent pop culture controversy displays many of these interpretations in a single setting. One day in 2012, country music star Brad Paisley (1972-) walked into a Starbucks wearing a T-shirt promoting the band Lynyrd Skynyrd, and was surprised to learn the shirt offended the African-American barista serving him. It was not Lynyrd Skynyrd to which the server took exception – it was the Confederate Battle Flag which serves as a frequent icon of the band. In "Accidental Racist," a song he wrote in reaction to the incident, Paisley remarks that "When I put on that T-shirt, the only thing I meant to say is, I'm a Skynyrd fan," and goes on to note that he feels "caught between southern pride and southern blame." Paisley's song came in for a fair amount of criticism, such as "Mr. Paisley's inability to connect the dots between the Confederate battle flag on his shirt and the things that trouble him about the South is stunning." [37]

To many of Paisley's critics, it is beyond obvious that the Confederate Battle Flag stands for the most unrepentant thread of racism, exemplified by the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups. But as Paisley's feeling of surprise in that Nashville Starbucks attests, not all white southerners agree. Paisley may have worn the flag to show his support for Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Skynyrd were known to sing songs that rejected their parents' attempts to raise them with anti-African American views. The band may have waved the rebel flag to irritate their mothers who would never have countenanced a bunch of long-haired rock and rollers defaming their ancestors' sacred symbol. The Confederate Battle Flag is rich with different meanings to different audiences.[38]

EUREKA FLAG

Old Flag

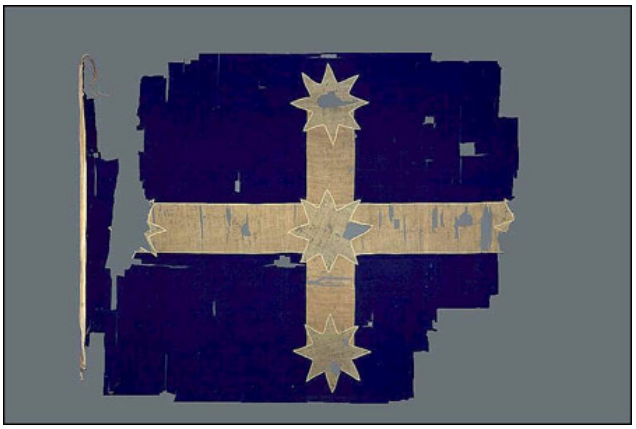
In Australia, the Eureka Flag is an excellent example of an old flag that has been given new meanings. The original flag is a relic of a miners' strike that occurred on the goldfields of Ballarat, Victoria in 1854. Miners were dissatisfied over the cost of the license fee assessed by the government regardless of whether or not they were successful in finding gold. Discontent also arose over the misuse of power on the part of the colonial authorities. Several incidents of perceived injustice added to the sense of dissatisfaction and prompted nearly 10,000 miners to organize and form the Ballarat Reform League on 11 November 1854. In the weeks that followed, the miners' efforts to negotiate were met by an increased police presence in the goldfields. The miners constructed a stockade and the authorities sent for reinforcements from Melbourne. On 29 November 1854 the Eureka flag was raised for the first time and the event was recorded by the *Ballarat Times* the following day:

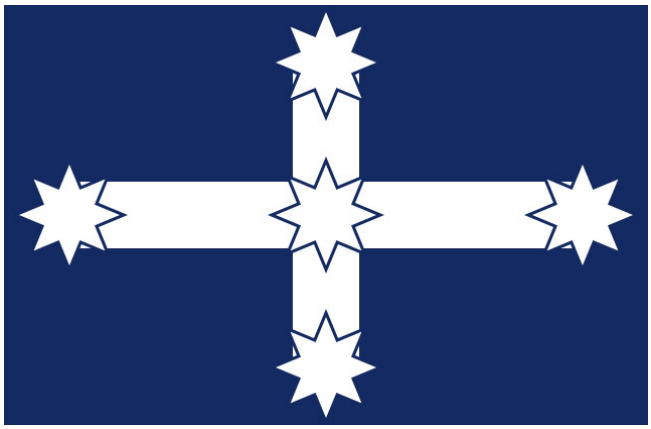
> *During the whole of the morning several men were busily employed erecting a suitable stage, and planting the flagstaff. This is a very splendid pole of about eighty feet, and straight as an arrow. This work being completed about eleven o'clock, the "Southern Cross" was hoisted, and its maiden appearance was a fascinating object to behold. There is no flag in Europe, or in the civilized world half so beautiful, and Bakery Hill, as being the place where the Australian ensign was first hoisted, will be recorded in the deathless and indelible pages of history. The flag is silk, blue ground with large silver cross; no device or arms, but all exceedingly chaste and natural. At one o'clock there were about 12,000 men present and at two the business of the day commenced.*

Peter Lalor, one of the leaders of the miners, called upon the others to swear the following oath:

"We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and defend our rights and liberties."

On 3 December 1854, the police approached the stockade and the conflict became violent. At the end of the incident, at least 22 miners had died and 114 of their compatriots were arrested and held for trial. In addition, there were six fatalities on the side of the police and soldiers.[39]





Figures 35-36.

Left: Remains of the Eureka flag. **Right**: Modern standardized design of the Eureka flag. Note that on the original flag there was no blue fimbriation to separate the stars from the cross. In more recent versions of the flag, the border is usually added to make the stars more prominent. (Source: *Wikipedia*)

While this flag was not the first to use the *Crux Australis* (Southern Cross) to represent a distinctive sense of Australian identity, this feature has contributed to the elevation of the Eureka Flag to the status of an icon of the nation's development. Over time, Australians have debated the significance of the Eureka uprising and ascribed various meanings to it. Historian David Goldman identified five different interpretations based upon the political viewpoint of the observer, further clarified in a tabular form by Warwick Frost:

Political Viewpoint	**Interpretation of the Eureka Incident**
Liberal	Birthplace of Australian Democracy. A fight for freedom against oppressive government.
Radical Nationalist	Fight for Australian Nationalism and independence from Britain
Sceptical Left	Pessimistic view, little long-term benefit for workers
Conservative Revisionist	Democratic reforms were not caused by Eureka, they would have happened anyway
Capitalist Triumph	The miners were independent small capitalists protesting against bureaucratic government interference

While Eureka is usually referred to as a "rebellion," it was not a revolution. The miners were not trying to establish an independent state or break away from the crown. What is clear is that the miners were protesting what they saw as an unfair tax and that they objected to the way the law was enforced by the local authorities.[40]

Even the "facts" about the Eureka flag have been open to interpretation and the published accounts have changed over time. For example, the design as first illustrated in print showed the flag with a much different style of cross instead of the crossbars which are now known to be on the flag. Other images showed the crossbar as extending all the way to the edge of the field on all sides. The newspaper description from the time of the incident described a flag of silk, while the actual flag is made of other materials. In addition, the colour of the cross is described as "silver," when that on the flag is actually white. For these reasons, it took many years to authenticate the actual flag.

Authentication was finally achieved because the historical record has an account of what happened to the flag after the conflict. We know that the flag was seized and trampled by the victors. Per the tradition of the day, various participants in the incident removed pieces of the flag to keep them as souvenirs. The bulk of the flag was retained by Captain John King, who produced it as evidence at the trial of 13 miners in February 1855 (in which they all were acquitted). King and his family kept the flag until 1895, when it was transferred to the Ballarat Art Gallery. Eventually, the flag was authenticated by comparing it to a documented fragment known to have been removed from the flag by Dr. Alfred Carr on the battlefield. After many years, the flag underwent a formal conservation treatment and is now displayed in the gallery. Over time the Ballarat Art Gallery has acquired many of the souvenir fragments, reuniting them at least in proximity to the original flag.[41]

New Meanings

As previously mentioned, there is little consensus among Australians about the meaning of the Eureka stockade and the events that occurred there. The same is true of the Eureka Flag. Over time, many different groups have appropriated the flag and given it new meanings. One common theme is that it is often used as a flag of dissent. Some of the earliest re-uses of the flag, or flags clearly derived from it, were associated with labour actions such as that of the Victoria Land League (1857), the Miner's Protection League (1862), and the Seaman's Union strike (1878). Eventually, the flag became a popular symbol used by organized labour movements in Australia. It was adopted by the radical left-wing faction of the Australian Labor Party in the 1930s and became a popular symbol used by the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) during May Day parades in the 1940s. The Eureka Youth League, the CPA's youth movement, also used the flag during this period. In the 1960s, it became associated with the Builders' Labourers Federation (B.L.F.) and then later with the Electrical Trades' Union and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union. To this day, the flag continues to be used by those on the left end of the political spectrum in Australia.[42]

Figure 37. Members of the Builders Labourers Federation (B.L.F.) pose with the Eureka Flag. (Source: *The Irish Worker*)

Figure 38. The Eureka Flag as used by the Australia First Party. The party is opposed to immigration and multiculturalism, and seeks to make Australia independent from influence by other nations.

(Source: Australia First Party).

However, the Eureka Flag is not just the banner of Australian labour and leftists. Those on the political right have also appropriated it. Within this context, various racist and nationalist groups have used the flag for their own causes including the Australian National Socialist Party in the 1960s, as well as the National Front (Australia), National Action, and National Alliance, all groups that were active in the 1970s and 1980s. Later it was used by the One Nation Party (1990s) and the Australia First Party. Various independence and republican movements have also chosen the Eureka flag as their symbol at various points in Australian history.[43]

The consequence of the many appropriated uses of the Eureka flag by both the left and the right is that the flag now carries a lot of symbolic baggage. The message conveyed by the flag depends upon who is using it, making it difficult for those who do not share those views to reclaim the flag as a historical symbol that belongs to all Australians. There are many who have spoken out against what they see as "misuse" of the Eureka Flag

for extremist purposes. During an event in Ballarat in 1992, Governor-General Bill Hayden noted that the flag had "lost much of its fashionable appeal because of its appropriation by the B.L.F., then more recently by the rather extremist National Front and lately by sections of the Republican Movement." He suggested that moderate Australians should "consider what might be done to restore the purity of its bloodlines." One proposal for reclaiming the Eureka Flag has been the suggestion that the flag, or a derivative design, would be an excellent candidate for a new national flag design for Australia.[44]

CONCLUSION

In ways that are easily explained by changes of regime, some formerly authoritative flags have become relegated to markers of ethnicity. But in others, the loss of status for a flag is not as easily understood. The Confederate Battle Flag and St. George's cross, for example, were once held in reverence by most white citizens of the American South and England respectively, yet now they are scorned by many. We suggest that they have acquired a taint of disdain owing to their association with political groups whose views are considered unacceptable to the same bourgeois and elites who formed the core of the flag-reverencing communities of yore.

In monetary policy, there is a well-known axiom called Gresham's Law that states, "Bad money drives out good money." In an economy with "debased" coinage – precious metals mixed with copper or other lower-value metals – coins of pure silver or gold will not circulate at face value, but will rather be hoarded as bullion. In vexillology, a similar effect is seen. When a flag is used simultaneously by groups at various points along the political spectrum, it eventually becomes associated with the most extreme points of view and is disavowed by those who seek to maintain a position in the mainstream of a society. We humbly call this the "Platoff/Knowlton effect." [45]

We may find explanations for the Platoff/Knowlton effect in the works of anthropologists. Harrison explored a phenomenon he calls "symbolic conflict." Calling upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu, he suggests that within any society there is a pool of "symbolic capital." Symbolic capital, by analogy to economic capital, represents the sum of esteem or prestige. As groups struggle over the control of symbols, they are seeking to obtain a greater ratio of the symbolic capital. This struggle expresses some fundamental truths: that flags have symbolic power tied to groups of people, and that the victory of one group in seizing a symbol may result in its rejection by others.[46]

Whitney Smith linked flags with the totems of pre-national tribal societies. A totem "expressed the origin and obligations of the clan and its relationship with others" and "in turn was intimately linked with the political structure, since the elite maintained the legitimacy which allowed them to rule without resort to constant force only by conforming to the norms and expectations of a dominant myth structure." However, as certain flags were abandoned or neglected, their totemic power lost its hold on the entirety of society. When a group whose political opinions were considered on the fringe embraced a flag, its totemic power was transferred to that group. The mainstream could not use the old flag again without acknowledging the flag's connection to a different group than had originally used it.[47]

There may also be an element of class-consciousness in the abandonment of the old meaning in some flags. The British National Front, and the Ku Klux Klan, are primarily composed of lower-class whites. While their opinions may be distasteful, much more distasteful to the middle class are the class markers they exhibit, from particular brands and styles of clothing to the accents with which they speak. In his classic study, Erving Goffman demonstrated that when lower-class people begin to embrace a formerly middle-class symbol, the middle-class will reject the symbol it formerly embraced.[48]

This, then, is another sense in which a "bad" meaning of the flag drives out a "good" meaning. The opinions of the Ku Klux Klan are not very different from the opinions of most white Southerners in the 1940s. However, the prominence of deeply rural accents and down-market clothing diminishes the attachment of middle-class Southerners to the flag which the Klan so prominently waves.

The symbolic conflict seen as the meaning of flags changes, therefore, encompasses both the totemic power of flags to pull a society together for governance, and the ability of higher-status groups to displace the meaning from a symbol to preserve their own status when a totem is embraced by others. The new meanings of old flags give vexillologists much to ponder as we explore how people use bits of coloured cloth to shape their understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

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BIOGRAPHICAL

ANNE M. PLATOFF, FF

Annie Platoff in front of ICV 25 flag during the Netherlands Flag Congress (2013)

Anne "Annie" Platoff is a science librarian at the University of California, Santa Barbara Library.

As a vexillologist Annie has conducted research on a variety of topics including proposed designs for the state flag of Kansas, the Pike-Pawnee Flag Incident, the World Flag of the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, and Haitian Vodou flags.

Annie has also written several works on space vexillology including a thorough history of the symbols of NASA and the use of flags in the U.S. manned space program. She is the leading authority on the placement of American flags on the Moon, having authored the official NASA history on the Apollo 11 flag ("Where No Flag Has Gone Before") and a follow-up work ("Six Flags Over Luna: The Role of Flags in Moon Landing Conspiracy Theories"). In addition, she has written two papers on the use of flags in the Space Shuttle Program.

A long-time student of the Russian language, Annie is also interested in the vexillology of the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union. She has published a book on the flags of Russia's federal subjects (*Russian Regional Flags*) and several articles on Russian and Soviet topics including Soviet Children's Flags, the changing use of the bear as a symbol of Russia, and a study of the *Znamia Pobedy* (the Soviet Banner of Victory from World War II).

Annie is currently serving as NAVA's 1st vice president and served several terms as 2nd vice president. She oversaw the creation of the NAVA Digital Library, a project designed to provide all issues of *NAVA News* and *Raven: A Journal of Vexillology* online.

Her current project is the creation of an International Vexillological Index (IVI). Her plan is that the IVI will become a community-created index of the world's vexillological literature. Work on this project is still in progress.

Annie has twice been awarded the Captain William Driver award for the best paper presented at a NAVA meeting, received FIAV's Vexillon for her book *Russian Regional Flags*, and was the first woman to be named a Fellow of FIAV, in 2013.

This lecture received the Whitney Smith Award for the best paper at an ICV.

In 2021 Annie received a PhD from the University of Leicester; her thesis was "Symbols in Service of the State: The role of flags and other symbols in the civil religion of the Soviet Union".

STEVEN A. KNOWLTON

Steve in front of a quilt constructed from a set of 3x5 inch flags sewn by Jessica Knowlton.

A Collection Development Librarian at the University of Memphis. He began seriously researching flags in 2011, and has since published three articles in *Raven*, and others in *Flag Research Quarterly* and *NAVA News*.

He has also presented three papers at NAVA Annual Meetings, and was awarded the Captain William Driver award for best paper at the 2012 NAVA meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

Steve is interested in the cognitive and symbolic mechanisms by which flags are understood and given meaning. Topics of his papers have included the application of semiotic frameworks to classifying flags ("Applying Sebeok's Typology of Signs to the Study of Flags"), explaining the symbolic resonance between similar flag designs ("Evocation and Figurative Thought in Tennessee Flag Culture"), the cognitive psychology involved in visual categorization of flags ("Flag Proportions: Thoughts on Flag Families and Artistic Unity"), and some good old flag history ("Contested Symbolism in the Flags of New World Slave Risings").

Steve is currently serving as NAVA's secretary, and is on the editorial board of *Flag Research Quarterly*. His other research interests include the history of Memphis, library history, and the development of useful and novel techniques to assess library collections. He was been published in *Tennessee Historical Quarterly, College and Research Libraries, Library Resources and Technical Services,* and *Serials Review*, among other journals.