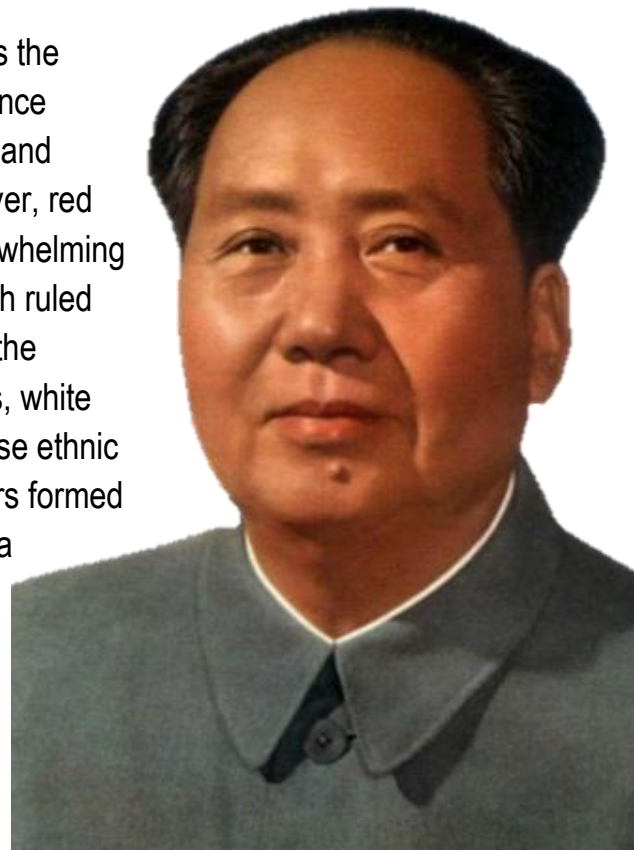


# History through flags: Flag of China



Adopted: October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949

The red of the Chinese flag has two historical bases. It expresses the revolutionary communist philosophy that has dominated China since 1949, when the forces of Mao Zedong won the Chinese civil war and expelled the Nationalists and their flag from the mainland. However, red is also the traditional ethnic colour of the Han, who form the overwhelming majority in the country. Under the Ch'ing (Manchu) dynasty, which ruled from 1644 until 1911/12, most of the flags of China were yellow, the Manchu ethnic colour. Blue became associated with the Mongols, white with the Tibetans, and black with the Hui—the other major Chinese ethnic groups. In the first republic, established in 1912, these five colours formed horizontal stripes in the national flag. Indeed, five has long been a significant number in Chinese symbolism; it corresponds to the four cardinal points plus the centre (i.e., China itself), as well as the traditional Five Classics, Five Elements, Five Rulers, and Five Virtues.<sup>1</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Flag of China." Encyclopædia Britannica. February 05, 2018. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-of-China>.

In the flag of the People's Republic of China, first officially hoisted on October 1, 1949, the symbolism of five was reflected in the stars appearing in yellow in the upper hoist canton. The large star was said to stand for the Chinese Communist Party and its leading role in guiding the nation. The smaller stars, one point of each of which aims at the centre of the large star, were associated with the four social classes united in the coalition supporting the party—the proletariat, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, and the “patriotic capitalists.” Later, reinterpretations of the party structure led to a revised symbolism: the large star was said to stand for China, the smaller stars for the country's many national minorities.<sup>2</sup>

On 4 July 1949, the sixth working group of the Preparatory Committee of the New Political Consultative Conference published a notice in various papers calling for submissions of designs for a national flag. The instructions were:

**The national flag should pay attention to:**

**(a) Chinese characteristics (such as geography, ethnicity, history, culture, etc.);**

**(b) Characteristics of the regime (the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class based on the alliance of workers and peasants);**

**(c) The form is rectangular, and the ratio of length to width is three to two, which is mainly solemn and concise;**

**(D) The color is mainly red, and other colors can be used.<sup>3</sup>**

According to the Chinese Government News, 2,992 designs were submitted to a special committee struck to make the final decision. It was reported that Mao Zedong picked up the five-star red flag designed by Zeng Liansong and said: "This pattern represents the great unity of our revolutionary people. Now we must be united and we must be united in the future. Now it is good, the future is good, it is unity and revolution. After Mao Zedong finished speaking, the participants unanimously applauded.<sup>4</sup>



Zeng Liansong's design

<sup>2</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Flag of China." Encyclopædia Britannica. February 05, 2018. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-of-China>.

<sup>3</sup> 维基媒体项目贡献者. "新政治協商會議籌備會為徵求國旗國徽圖案及國歌辭譜啓事." 维基文库, 自由的图书馆. November 04, 2009. Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/新政治協商會議籌備會為徵求國旗國徽圖案及國歌辭譜啓事>.

<sup>4</sup> "Creation of the Flag, Emblem and Anthem of the People's Republic of China" (in Chinese). Chinese Government News. 2006-10-08. Archived from the original on 2008-10-13. Retrieved 2019-05-29.