Drawing flags with TikZ

Wilhelm Haager wilhelm.haager@htlstp.ac.at

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1 Introduction

Worldflags is a package for drawing flags using TikZ. Currently the national flags of all independent nations are included, additionally some other flags of various organizations; there's more to come.

A particular flag is selected via a parameter; for national flags that is the two-letter country code (i. e. the domain name). A flag can be drawn in two ways:

- As a single TikZ-picture within ordinary text.
- As a picture element within a TikZ-picture.

The appearance of a flag (size, frame etc.) can be adapted using optional parameters.

The description of every flag resides in a particular flag description file worldflag_xx.tex, wherein xx is the parameter for selecting a particular flag, as listed in section 4. That saves memory and computing time on the one hand, as only the required flags have to be loaded. On the other hand, the package can easily be extended by adding new flag description files.

Some flags with complicated emblems (e. g. Afghanistan, Ecuador) require a lot of memory. Thus an expansion of T_FX's main memory size is recommended.

The flag descriptions are based on the construction sheets in [1] (thanks to Mello Luchtenberg for that great website), complex emblems have been taken from the svg-files on Wikipedia and have been translated into Tikz via Inkscape (with a reasonable amount of manual post editing).

2 Usage

2.1 Flags as single TikZ-pictures

Commands:

\worldflag[opts] $\{xx\}$ draws the flag xx with the optional parameters opts as

a particular TikZ-picture.

\flagsdefault[opts] sets default values for the options opts for subsequent

flags.

Options:

width=dimension sets the flag width, default: 15 mm.

length=dimension sets the flag length; if set to 0 pt (default), the length is

calculated according to the proper aspect ratio of the

flag.

framewidth=dimension sets the line width of the frame around the flag, de-

fault: 0.2 mm.

framecolor=*colorname* sets the color of the flag frame, default: black!60.

stretch=number controls stretching and shrinking of geometric shapes

when the aspect ratio differs from its proper value.

grid causes a millimeter-grid drawn on the flag as an aid

for constructing new flags.

noemblem supresses the drawing of an emblem, which is part of

many flags.

emblem enforces the drawing of an emblem onto the flag

which is otherwise supressed (currently only applies

to the flags of Austria and Germany).

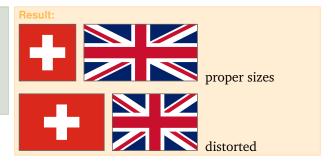
emblemdefault restores the default behavior for drawing emblems.

\worldflag{xx} draws a flag, selected by the parameter xx, as a single TikZ-picture. Section 4 lists all available flags and their selection code xx. Various properties of the flag can be specified with additional optional parameters as key-value pairs.

\flagsdefault[opts] specifies default values for the Options opts for subsequent flags.

The *width* of a flag defaults to 15 mm, it can be overridden with the option width. If one of the dimensions *width* or *length* is set to 0 pt (which is the default value for *length*), its value results from the proper aspect ratio width/length, which is proprietary to every flag. E. g. the Swiss flag is quadratic, it has an aspect ratio of 1:1, the British flag has an aspect ratio of 1:2. If width is set to 0 pt, length *must* be specified. If both dimensions are specified, flags loose their proper aspect ratio but get the same size:

\worldflag{CH} \worldflag{GB} proper sizes\\[6pt] \worldflag[length=22.5mm]{CH} \worldflag[length=22.5mm]{GB} distorted



If both width and length of a flag are specified, which differs from ist proper aspect ratio, some geometries on the flag will unavoidably get distorted. There is presumably no general rule whether certain distances on the flag should remain unchanged in that case, or certain ratios – as flag owners do not intend to distort their flags – but that behavior can be influenced for many flags applying the option stretch. If stretch is set to 0 (which is default), certain distances and sizes on the flag remain unchanged, when the flag is stretched; if set to 1, certain ratios remain unchanged in that case. Values within the range of 0...1are possible to get a compromise between both cases.

The following examples illustrate that behavior:

Canada: stretch=0 The *size* of the maple leaf remains unchanged.

stretch=1 The ratio of the widths - maple leaf and pale - remains un-

changed; the maple leaf has to shrink.

Code: \flagsdefault[width=12mm] \worldflag{CA} \worldflag[length=18mm]{CA} \worldflag[length=18mm,stretch=1]{CA}



Denmark: stretch=0 The distance from the vertical bar to the hoist remains unchanged.

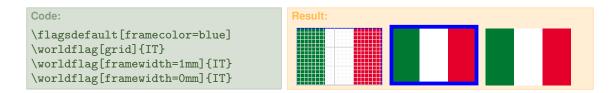
The ratio of the distances to the hoist and to the fly remains stretch=1 unchanged.

Code: \flagsdefault[width=12mm] \worldflag{DK} \worldflag[length=18mm]{DK} \worldflag[length=18mm,stretch=1]{DK}



The option grid causes a millimeter-grid drawn over the flag. That is primarily a measuring aid for the construction of new flags.

The options framecolor and framewidth set the color and the line width of the frame drawn around the flag, respectively. The default value for the line width is 0.2 mm, the default color is black!60. If framewidth is set to 0 mm (or 0 pt), no frame is drawn at all.



Many flags have an emblem on it, e.g. a coat of arms or a special symbol. Those emblems are often very complex and require a lot of computing time and memory. The depiction of such an emblem can be supressed with the option noemblem, either for the sake of saving computing time (for dafts) or just because simplified version of the flag is required. Some countries distinguish between a *civil* flag without an emblem and a *state* flag containing an emblem.

Some flags don't have an emblem by default, but an emblem is available for special purposes. In that case the depiction of the emblem can be enforced with the option emblem. Currently that only applies to the country flags of Austria and Germany (more will come). The option emblemdefault restores the default behavior for drawing emblems.



The emblem (i. e. the coat of arms) in the Austrian flag is supressed by default, the emblem in the Croatian flag is depicted default.

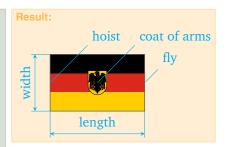
2.2 Flags as picture elements within a TikZ-picture

Within a Tikz-picture the flags are available as *pic*-Elements named worldflag. A particular flag is selectet with the option country. Unlike *nodes*, *pic*-elements cannot be referenced by name, but named nodes and coordinates within the *pic*-element can be referenced. Hence every flag has special coordinates for referencing:

```
-0 ... center of flag
-nw ... upper left corner ("north-west") -n ... top edge center ("north")
-ne ... upper right corner ("north-east") -e ... fly edge center ("east")
-sw ... lower left corner ("south-west") -w ... hoist edge center ("west")
-se ... lower right corner ("south-east") -s ... bottom edge center ("south")
```

```
Commands:
\pic (xy) [country=xx,...] at pos {worldflag};
                             draws the flag xx and gives it the name xy; the flag is
                             centerd at the coordinate pos.
\flagsdefault[opts]
                             sets default values for the options opts.
Options:
width=dimension
                             sets the flag width, default: 15 mm.
length=dimension
                             sets the flag length; if set to 0 pt (default), the length is
                             calculated according to the proper aspect ratio of the
                             flag.
framewidth=dimension
                             sets the line width of the frame around the flag, de-
                             fault: 0.2 mm.
                             sets the color of the flag frame, default: black!60.
framecolor=colorname
                             controls stretching and shrinking of geometric shapes
stretch=number
                             when the aspect ratio differs from its proper value.
                             causes a millimeter-grid drawn on the flag.
grid
                             supresses the drawing of an emblem onto the flag.
noemblem
                             enforces the drawing of an emblem onto the flag.
emblem
emblemdefault
                             restores the default behavior for drawing emblems.
rotate=\alpha
                             rotates the flag \alpha degrees around its center.
                             rotates the flag \beta degrees around the (imaginary) flag-
turn=\beta
                             lets the flag "hang down" γ degrees from the (imagi-
hang=\gamma
                             nary) flag pole.
```

The following example illustrates the usage of the special coordinates:



The option **rotate** causes the flag to be rotated around the flag center with a given angle in degree.

Note: That option is not proprietary to flags, it is a general option for *any* pic-element. Hence it is *not* possible to give it a default value with the command flagsdefault.

```
Code:

\begin{tikzpicture}

\flagsdefault[width=12mm,length=18mm]
\foreach \c/\n in {HU/0,SK/1,IT/6,SI/7}

\pic [country=\c,rotate=\n*45]

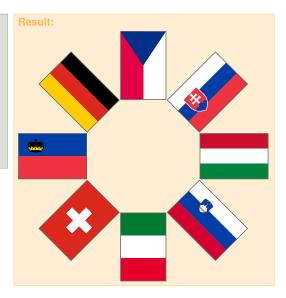
at (\n*45:24mm) {worldflag};

\foreach \c/\n in {CZ/2,DE/3,LI/4,CH/5}

\pic [country=\c,rotate=\n*45-180]

at (\n*45:24mm) {worldflag};

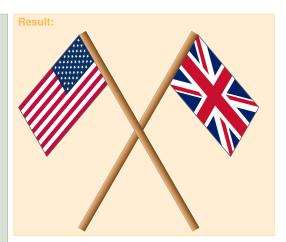
\end{tikzpicture}
```



The option turn lets the flag rotate around the imaginary flagpole with a given angle β (in degrees). The length of the flag will *seemingly* shrink with a factor of $\cos \beta$. With a value of $\beta = 180$ the flag will just appear mirrored. The option hang lets the flag "hang down" from the imaginary flagpole with a given angle γ (in degrees); the flag will be sheared and compressed accordingly.

The following example shows a combination of rotate, turn and hang.

```
Code:
\begin{tikzpicture}[x=1mm,y=1mm]
\left( \sqrt{30} \right)
\left(d{20}\right)
\pgfdeclarehorizontalshading{flagpole}
   {30mm}{color(0mm)=(white);
   color(1mm)=(brown); color(2mm)=(black)}
\flagsdefault[width=15mm,hang=20]
\pic (gb) [country=GB,rotate=-\w]
    at (\d,0) {worldflag};
\pic (us) [country=US,rotate=\w,turn=180]
     at (-\d,0) {worldflag};
\fill [shading=flagpole, shading angle=-\w,
      rotate around={-\w:(gb-nw)}]
      (gb-nw)-|++(-2,-60)-|cycle;
\fill [shading=flagpole, shading angle=\w,
      rotate around={\w:(us-nw)}]
      (us-nw)-|++(2,-60)-|cycle;
\end{tikzpicture}
```



3 Internals

This section is intended for those who want to *extend* the worldflag package and create new flags. Those who just want to *use* the package and draw existing flags, need not read it.

Evey flag resides in a particular "flag description file" named worldflag_xx.tex, wherein xx is the code for selecting a flag. Extending the package with new flags is quite easy: Just a flag description file for every new flag has to be written and put into a directory, where TEX can find it. No configuration files, no other actions; that's it.

3.1 Flag description file

Every flag description file has the following structure:

```
\label{eq:local_red_red_red} $$\{r,g,b\} @ $$ \end{tikzpicture} $$ \end{
```

① This command calculates the flag length, which will be stored in the dimension register \flaglength, from the flag width, which is stored in the dimension register \flagwidth (or vice versa) using the proper aspect ratio of the flag. That aspect ratio has to be specified with the two parameters y (width) and x (length). Those parameters have to be interger numbers, their absolute values don't matter.

Furthermore, two nested scopes are opened: The outer scope sets the drawing unit to \flagwidth (note: the top edge of a flag has always a *y*-coordinate of 1) and performs the coordinate transformation according to the options turn and hang. The inner scope shifts the coordinate system to the flag center.

In the sequel, the special coordinates -0, -n, -ne, -e, -se, -s, -sw, -w and -nw are established – as described in section 2.2.

- ② Every flag has proprietary shadings of colors. Hence even common colors have to be redefined for every flag separately.
- ③ TikZ commands for drawing and filling of shapes make up the core of a flag description file. A couple of macros (see section 3.3) for common geometric figures facilitate the creation of the flag image.

This command draws a rectangular frame around the flag. The line width, set with the option framewidth, is stored in the dimension register \flagframe; the frame color, set with the option framecolor, is stored in the macro \framecolor. For non-rectangular flags (e. g. Nepal) the flag frame has to be programmed "manually".

⑤ This command draws a millimeter-grid onto the flag, if invoked with the option grid and closes the two previously opened scopes.

3.2 Variables

A couple of properties of a flag are kept in variables, which are either dimension registers or macros. Those variables are set by the user, specifying options or are calculated internally. They are used in the code for the flag description, but need not be set directly.

Dimension registers:

\flagwidth width of the flag (vertical extent)

\flaglength length of the flag (horizontal extent)

\flagframe line width of the flag frame

Macros:

\framecolor color name of the flag frame

\viewangle angle of the rotation around the flagpole

\hangangle angle of the "hanging down" from the flagpole

\flagstretch conrols stretching of certain geometries, when stretch-

ing the entire flag

\StretchFactor factor for stretching of certain geometries according to

\flagstretch

\flagwidth and \flaglength specify the width and length of a flag. They are set by the user with the options width and length or are calculaterd from each other by \AspectRatio internally. \flagwidth is the unit for coordinates and lengths in the flag description.

The properties of the flag frame are kept in the variables \flagframe and \framecolor; they can be set with the options framewidth and framecolor.

\StretchFactor is a factor for stretching certain x-coordinates, when the whole flag is stretched (or compressed), i.e. when the aspect ratio differs from its proper value. It is calculated by \AspectRatio from the variable \flagstretch, which itself is user-specified with the Option stretch.

3.3 Commands

```
\BeginFlagDescription{y}{x}
                                         see section 3.1
                               see section 3.1
\EndFlagDescription
\Lambda \operatorname{SpectRatio}\{y\}\{x\}
                               calculates the dimensions of the flag and the
                               variable \StretchFactor; called by
                               \BeginFlagDescription.
\FrameCode
                               draws the rectangular frame around the flag.
\GridCode
                               draws a millimeter-grid onto the flag; called by
                               \EndFlagDescription.
Geometric flag elements:
\hstripesII\{c_1\}\{c_2\}
                               partitions the flag into two horizontal stripes with the
                               colors c_1 and c_2.
\hstripesIII\{c_1\}\{c_2\}\{c_3\} three horizontal stripes with the colors c_1, \ldots
\hstripesIV\{c_1\}\{c_2\}\{c_3\}\{c_4\} four horizontal stripes with the colors c_1, \ldots
\vstripesII\{c_1\}\{C_2\}
                               partitions the flag into two vertical stripes with the col-
                               ors c_1 and c_2.
\vstripesIII\{c_1\}\{c_2\}\{c_3\} three vertical stripes with the colors c_1, \ldots
horizontal bar with the color c and the line width w at
                               the y-coordinate y
\operatorname{vbar}\{c\}\{x\}\{w\}
                               vertical bar with the color c and the line width w at
                               the x-coordinate x
\chevron{c}{x}
                               isosceles triangle at the hoist with the color c and the
                               vertex at the x-coordinate x
\t \t x = V(c)(p)(r)(a)
                               5-pointed star as a compex polygon with the fill color
                               c, an outer raduis r, an angle \alpha at the coordinate p
\starVI{c}{p}{r}{\alpha}
                               6-pointed star as a compex polygon with the fill color
                               c, an outer raduis r, an angle \alpha at the coordinate p
\operatorname{starn}\{c\}\{n\}\{p\}\{r_1\}\{r_2\}\{\alpha\} n-pointed star with the fill color c, an outer raduis
                               r_a, an inner raduis r_i and an angle \alpha at the coordinate
\mod\{c\}\{p_1\}\{r_1\}\{p_2\}\{r_2\} crescent moon with the fill color c, as a difference set
                               of two generating circles with the radii r_1, r_2, and cen-
                               ter coordinates p_1 and p_2
\UnionJack\{x_1\}\{y_1\}\{x_2\}\{y_2\} Union Jack between the coordinates (x_1, y_1) and
```

The macros \hstripesII, \hstripesIII, \hstripesIV, \vstripesII, \vstripesIII partition the flag into an according number of horizontal or vertical colored stripes. \hstripesI draws a horizontal bar of given width and color at a specified y-coordinate across the flag; \vbar does the same vertically. \chevron draws an isosceles triangle with a given height

over the hoist. Those macros need to know the variables \flagwidth and \flaglength which have to be defined, if called outside a flag description file:

```
Code:
\newdimen\flagwidth\flagwidth=15mm
\newdimen\flaglength\flaglength=20mm
\begin{tikzpicture}[x=\flagwidth,y=\flagwidth]
\begin{scope}\hstripesIII{cyan}{white}{red}
    \FrameCode\end{scope}
\begin{scope}[shift=(1.5,0)]
    \vstripesIII{cyan}{white}{red}
   \FrameCode\end{scope}
\begin{scope}[shift={(0,-1.2)}]
    \begin{array}{ll} \hbar\{cyan\}\{0.5\}\{1\} \end{array}
   \frac{\text{white}}{0.5}\{0.3\}
    \vbar{white}{0.5}{0.3}
   \FrameCode\end{scope}
\begin{array}{l} \begin{array}{l} \text{begin} & \text{scope} \\ \end{array} \end{array} 
    \chevron{cyan}{1}\FrameCode\end{scope}
\end{tikzpicture}
```

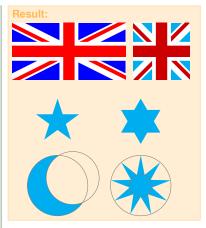
Note: A flag needs no background.

The following commands don't require the variables \flagwidth and \flaglength; they can be used arbitrarily outside a flag, anywhere in a TikZ-picture.

Union Jack draws the Union Jack (which is part of a couple of flags) between a lower left and an upper right point. Their coordinates $-x_1$, y_1 , x_2 , y_2 — are separate parameters, which *must* be specified as dimensions (i. e. using a unit), not just as numbers. The colors blue, red and white can be redefined arbitrarily.

The various types of stars \starV \starVI \starn and \moon are self-explanatory. In the following example \starn and \moon are overlayed with the generating circles.

```
Code:
    \begin{tikzpicture} [x=1mm,y=1mm]
    \UnionJack{0mm}{0mm}{30mm}{15mm}
    \colorlet{blue}{cyan}
    \definecolor{red}{rgb}{0.8,0,0}
    \UnionJack{32mm}{0mm}{47mm}{15mm}
    \begin{scope} [shift={(12,-28)}]
        \starV{cyan}{(0,17)}{6}{0}
        \starVI{cyan}{(22,17)}{6}{0}
        \starn{cyan}{9}{(22,0)}{8}{3}{0}
        \draw[gray] (22,0)circle(8) (22,0)circle(3);
        \moon{cyan}{(0,0)}{8}{(4,2)}{7}
        \draw[gray] (0,0)circle(8) (4,2)circle(7);
        \end{scope}
    \end{tikzpicture}
```



4 Flags

4.1 Country Flags

















4.2 Other Flags



European Union (EU)



United Nations (UNO)



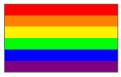
Red Cross (RedCross)



Olympics (Olympics)



Jolly Roger (JollyRoger)



Rainbow fag (Rainbow)

5 Links

[1] http://www.vexilla-mundi.com: Comprehensive website with flags of all nations including construction sheets, historical flags, flags of many cities and regions.

- [2] https://www.fotw.info: Website of the FOTW ("Flags Of The World"), vexillological association and internet resource; many background informations about flags and vexillology.
- [3] https://www.welt-flaggen.de: Flags of and information about all countries of the world; contains flag quizzes.
- [4] https://www.nationalflaggen.de: Provides various images and animated gifs of all national flags.