



Solidarity for Ukraine –issue 47- *Primus inter pares*

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) joins the international solidarity in favor of Ukraine attacked by Russia on February 24, 2022. The Covid pandemic has weakened democratic countries. Conspiracy theories and hate speech have exploded. This war in Europe is existential for the European Union. This Newsletter is the first published in 2026 and the 47th since the beginning of the conflict. This year may be one of a fiercely negotiated peace for several months; we dedicate it to numbers, like so many "rounds" of a boxing match to win. January, first month of the year. What are the symbolic meanings of the number 1? In Latin, "primus" means "the first". The term appears in several Latin expressions, often associated with the figure of

authority. *Semper primus* means "always first" in Russia, an ideal that can be full of threats when one always wants to be the first, the leader, the reference, against others. *Primus sine paribus* in Ukraine, means "the first without parallel", distinguishing itself through originality and innovation, opening new paths and building a sustainable future together with others. *Primus inter pares* in Europe, the idea of an implicit reference even if the European Union has lost some of its prestige. It now has two 'challengers'. One is more 'friendly' - the United States which remains an allied but unstable country. The other is openly hostile – Russia, which attacked Ukraine in 2014 (annexation of Crimea) by symbolically declaring war on the Western world at the 2007 Munich conference. The European Union and the Western democracies, then united, were astonished by so much acrimony. Everything is open in this first month of the year 2026 - maybe not any more the first, but not the last either

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* logo designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

Number one

In the Bible, the number 1 symbolizes God, the only one. It expresses exclusivity, primacy, excellence. Jesus says: "*The Father and I are one*" (Jn 10:30). Saint Paul declares: "*There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God*" (Eph 4:5). The number 1 symbolizes the divine environment. (1). For Régis Burnet, Belgian professor of exegesis at the Catholic University of Louvain, in Belgium (2) "*The ancients left us textbooks on arithmology and divination, some exegetes tried to give meaning to biblical figures*" but in the end "*we don't know much.*" According to the Belgian specialist of the Bible, the symbolic use of numbers is not specific to biblical texts. It emerges from an ancestral practice borrowed from other traditions. The editors of the Bible do not therefore show themselves to be original. They have always been wary of numerology, magic, astrology, ... Except in the book of Revelation which mentions many numbers, but whose symbolism is naive. For Régis Burnet, what is rather striking and new is the use of the notion of 'half' which says incompleteness. It is a way for John to say that evil cannot complete its work in the face of God. "*Unsurprisingly, the number 1 represents unity, perfection, divinity. Symbolism of unity (Deuteronomy 6: 4). God is one, Jesus and the Father are one, etc*"

In mathematics, a prime is an integer greater than 1 that has only two distinct divisors: 1 and itself. In other words, it can only be entirely divided by 1 and by itself. The adjective 'first' means 'that comes before others, in an order', 'what is the oldest' in the sense of initial (3). The first experiences (learning) are often striking, the first times can leave amazed or more mixed memories; novelty can be destabilizing. First is sometimes synonymous with original, with primitive '*which is in the state of its origin, of its beginning*'. The term can also mean « what comes first for value, importance, what is more remarkable than others ». It then implies an idea of domination, excellence, primacy, the notion of hierarchy. When one is 'major' of his/her promotion, one is first in the ranking by exceptional or remarkable grades. One distinguishes oneself from others, the notion of competition and rivalry appears. The first needs are those that must be met as a priority, in a necessary and even indispensable way.

The Latin term '*primus*' contains positive notions, but also threatening ones. Everything depends on the context. Numbers and letters can give rise to very fanciful interpretations. Numerology is not a science, most of the time a fantasy. The use of symbols with diverse and varied connotations depending on the cultures must be carefully decoded. It is not surprising to associate the Russian strategy implemented since 2000 with a Latin phrase warrior *semper primus* while Ukraine has distinguished itself since February 2022 by an original, innovative, very courageous strategy that destabilized its opponents and highly impressed its allies. The Ukrainians are *primus sine paribus* - 'unparalleled first'. No one can compete with them because they have open new doors.

Semper primus in Russia

The latin motto *Semper primus* is that of the first Infantry Regiment of the American Army. Born at the end of the 18th century (1791), it distinguished itself in the most famous wars in the history of the United States since their independence. In the 19th century, the regiment was engaged against the Indians of the North-West, then against the British Crown and its allies (1812-1814), or in the war between Mexico and the United States (1846-1848), then during the Civil War or Secession War (1861-1865), and finally during the war against Spain (1898) ended with the siege of Santiago (Cuba) or in the Philippines where the United States annexed former Spanish colonies. The military formation became famous in the 20th century, alongside the Europeans, during the Second World War (1941-1945), during the Vietnam War (in the middle of the Cold War with the threat from popular China), then in Iraq, or more recently in Afghanistan (2001-2021).

The history of this prestigious regiment of the American Army should please President Vladimir Putin, especially its commitments in the nineteenth century. The United States have "freed themselves" from the European colonial hold - British, French or Spanish. On the other hand, the Russian president will forget the more contemporary period (XXth and XXIst centuries) when the United States was allied with the Europeans by allowing them to free themselves from Nazism. They also intervened in countries governed by autocrats or authoritarian regimes (Iraq, Afghanistan). President Putin would adopt a motto as triumphant as *semper primus*, with an exercise of power marked since 2000 by multiple conflicts - in Europe with Chechnya (1999-2009), Georgia (2008), or Ukraine (2014 and then 2022), but also in the Middle East with Syria (2013-2024). The more informal interventions of Russian troops multiplied in Africa with Wagner's mercenaries joining the Africa Corps after the execution of Prigogine in 2023.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the Russian president claims to be attacked by his neighbor. NATO troops would constitute a threat to Russia's security. The rapprochement with the EU is considered as a betrayal. Vladimir Putin never spoke of war but of a special operation. Since the arrival of President Donald Trump in January 2025, his narrative has adapted. He presents himself as a peacemaker faced with an obvious hostility from Ukraine, raised by the European Union. Several peace plans very favorable to Russia were suggested by the American emissaries, special envoys of President Donald Trump. They were all rejected by Vladimir Putin, who nevertheless displays his closeness to the American president, who has given himself the mission of stopping conflicts in the world in general, and in Europe in particular. The latest episode of peace talks thwarted by the Russian team - the Russian invention of a Ukrainian drone attack against a residence of Vladimir Putin on December 28, 2025. This imaginary attack arrives very opportunely. The same day Volodymyr Zelenski was in Washington to discuss a final peace plan that would be acceptable to Ukraine

Primus sine paribus

The phrase *primus sine paribus* means "first without parallel" - we are the first because no one else had yet opened this path. It could be the motto of all the genius inventors who made discoveries that changed our understanding of the world (the earth revolved around the sun and not the other way around), which saved humans years of healthy life (the progress of medicine with vaccination), which have allowed technical advances that have changed our living and working conditions (from the Gutenberg galaxy to the Marconi era, and now the advances of Artificial Intelligence...), or work on radioactivity (Marie Curie isolates radium and opens the way to nuclear research and medical radiology).

The genius of the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is to have thwarted all the traps set for him by his enemies, Vladimir Putin and his supporters, or by his friends, for instance Joe Biden proposing to exfiltrate him at the beginning of the conflict. Zelenski quickly understood that the Russian president was trying to discredit him, convinced that his attack in February 2022 would be completed in 3 weeks and that a pro-Russian puppet Ukrainian president could be installed (after rigged elections). Vladimir Putin mocked Zelenski as a mountebank, his lack of political or military experience. Four years later, he still refuses to meet him and continues to consider Ukraine as a vassal of Russia. President Zelenski has also held up well since February 2025, a new test, when his indispensable ally (for the supply of weapons and intelligence service on the ground), the United States, adopted the same strategy of denigration as the Russians. The Ukrainians "didn't have the cards" said Donald Trump. They were sure to lose. Without American help, the war would have been over long ago. The Ukrainian president adapted to this new unforeseen attack. He stood up with panache from the public humiliation inflicted on him by President Donald Trump and his Vice-President JD Vance at the White House in February 2025. He was able to change his discourse by adopting the transactional approach of the new team in power in Washington. He didn't formalize not being received like the Russian president in Anchorage (Alaska) in August 2025, with a red carpet and Hollywood staging. With each peace proposal, suggested by American emissaries who echoed the arguments of the Kremlin, he took seriously the negotiations from which he was excluded by bringing his proposals and amendments.

In addition to a heroism on the ground, with Ukrainian soldiers who do not give up and still surprise their allies with original offensives (attacks on Russian territory, sabotage of Russian ships...), the Ukrainian president has taken on very different roles since his election in 2019 to which he was not prepared. Politician first (2019-2022), he had to tackle decades of anti-democratic practices implemented since the Soviet era (corruption of elites, massive embezzlement of public funds, ...). War chief (2022-2025), he was neither impressed by the intense psychological warfare led by Russia, nor by the blackmail of the new American team, practiced by President Donald Trump since the Heather Biden affair in 2020. *Primus sine paribus* is certainly the most suitable motto for Ukrainians in the war they have been waging for four years with panache, originality and determination, "without equivalent".

Primus inter pares in Europe

The Latin phrase *primus inter pares* refers to a person who presides over an assembly without having his own powers. It emphasizes formal equality among members or the fact that decisions are made by consensus (for instance within a government). The *primus inter pares* effect, or illusory superiority effect, is a cognitive bias that leads individuals to overestimate their abilities and qualities compared to those of others with the dangers that such an attitude entails at the levels of individuals, of an organization, or of society. The European Union and the European democracies have taken up the cause of Ukraine and the Ukrainians since the February 2022 attack by Russia. They received the same treatment from the Russian regime - a massive hybrid war expressed by a permanent denigration orchestrated by pro-Russia media or influencers (heads of government insulted or ridiculed during very popular TV shows), repeated interferences in their home affairs (support of anti-EU candidates during legislative or presidential elections as in Romania), or various manipulations of opinion (stars of David on the walls of Paris or red hands on the Shoah Memorial to stir up antisemitic speeches)...

Like President Zelensky and the Ukrainians, the Europeans are not involved in negotiations conducted by US special envoys who deal directly with their Russian counterparts. The bilateral approach advocated by the Trump team allows American negotiators to consider "deals" with their Russian interlocutors. They prefer to deal with representatives of the economic world than with military personnel. It is no longer a fight of values - to defend an attacked country, Ukraine, because it wishes to be free, independent and democratic. The objective is to make the most of a critical situation for a country deemed weak by imposing leonine conditions on it, since it does not have «the cards». The European Union and the European democracies are excluded by refusal of multilateralism, a waste of time without an effective means of pressure, because they have also become targets. Financially supported by billionaires from Tech, President Trump is a grateful candidate. He intends to bend the European Union by attacking its regulations deemed against freedom of expression, while they protect citizens against the misuse of their personal data (4), against the abusive practices of platforms (5) and for a rational and controlled use of artificial intelligence (6). The refusal by the US authorities to issue visas on December 23, 2025 (7) to European personalities, foremost among them Thierry Breton, former European commissioner who is at the origin of all the directives protecting citizens against the offensives of tech giants, is quite revealing of this massive attack launched by the American team against the European Union. The unfriendly intervention of JD Vance at the Global Forum on AI organized in February 2025 in Paris had opened hostilities. This was the first red flag.

The Europeans may have fallen asleep on their laurels. They were naive, convinced of the good image they gave to their allies, solidly argued by their amazing achievements and the unspeakable progress of European construction. They may have overestimated each other. The road will be longer and more winding, but we can always restore our image and reputation thanks to our determination and unconditional support to Ukraine - *Slava Ukraini* !-

- (1) Jérôme Martineau, Canadian specialist of the Bible, former director of the journal *Notre-Dame du Cap*, director of a Community of the Arche in Québec- <https://fr.aleteia.org/2018/06/04/la-symbolique-des-chiffres-dans-la-bible/>
- (2) Sophie Delhalle ,« **La symbolique des chiffres bibliques décryptée par Régis Burnet** » , published on the 27th of September 2021- <https://www.cathobel.be/2021/09/la-symbolique-des-chiffres-bibliques-decryptee-par-regis-burnet/>
- (3) « Petit Robert », dictionnaire of French language, édition 1990
- (4) GDPR Act- 3 principles (transparency, loyalty and legality) and 7 rights (access, rectification, erasure, portability, limitation, opposition, information...)
- (5) DSA Act - the regulation on digital services that frames platform activities applied since February 17, 2024 - obligations to know to protect oneself from unpleasant surprises with platforms, Arcom 'coordinator of digital services' (DSC) in France
- (6) AI Act - European Regulation (adopted in May 2024 which enters into force in 2026, classifying AI applications into 3 risk categories - applications and systems that create unacceptable risk, (social rating for example) + high-risk applications (resume scanning tool that ranks job applicants) + applications that are not explicitly banned or listed that largely escape regulation
- (7) Thierry Breton forbidden to stay in the USA by the American authorities https://www.franceinfo.fr/monde/usa/l-ex-commissaire-europeen-thierry-breton-interdit-de-visa-par-les-etats-unis_7698550.html

Newsletter written on December, 31st , 2025

Plan International, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

Les Banques alimentaires - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

L'Association des maires de France a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

La plateforme officielle « *Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine* » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.- <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF) - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France