**A dialogue with Napoleon Bonaparte**

[Najm us Saqib](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/najm-us-saqib)

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Napoleon Bonaparte is known as one of the most celebrated Generals in Western history. The Battle of Waterloo proved to be the end of his historied military career as he committed certain obvious tactical errors and acted indecisively, arguably due to fatigue and poor health during the Belgian campaign. Historians would blame him for appointing incompetent commanders who failed to coordinate their strategy. Reportedly, he was in tears when he rode away from the battle. Unluckily for him, people all around the world bring up his defeat at Waterloo the moment his name is mentioned anywhere. Hardly anyone would wish to recall how many fierce battles he managed to win against the toughest of enemies before he died in 1821 at the age of fifty-one.

Besides becoming the Emperor of France, he sponsored the Napoleonic Code, the prototype of later Civil Law codes. He is also remembered as an extremely talented strategist who revolutionized military organization and training. In addition, he reorganized education and established the Concordat with the papacy. Simultaneously, he was one of the most revered thinkers of his time. You don’t believe it? Read on….!! You might also see some relevance of his wisdom in the context of today’s Pakistan or equate it with the unexpected rise and expected fall of one of the most ambitious political figures in this country. Moderator: One fails to understand why an individual would not face reality after being defeated. Why do we forget that others also have a right to fight for power? Don’t you think one should just let go when faced with defeat and try finding some other position in the corridors of power? Napoleon: ‘Power is my mistress. I have worked too hard at her conquest to allow anyone to take her away from me.’ Moreover, ‘I can no longer obey; I have tasted command, and I cannot give it up.’

[Elton John’s Glastonbury triumph attracts 7.3 million TV viewers](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2023/elton-john-s-glastonbury-triumph-attracts-7-3-million-tv-viewers)

Moderator: Give us a sense of the politics and its dynamics particularly when it comes to you versus your country. Secondly, how many U-turns could one politician take before realizing that words also carry importance and retracting your statements adversely affects your character? Napoleon: ‘In politics... never retreat, never retract... never admit a mistake.’ ‘In politics, stupidity is not a handicap.’ ‘I am sometimes a fox and sometimes a lion. The whole secret of government lies in knowing when to be the one or the other.’ Moderator: Giving hope to your people for a better future is understandable. But mere hope means nothing if not substantiated by action. However, we see political leaders making promises only to offer justifications subsequently for their failures. Secondly, tell us which takes preference over what? Your ‘interests’ or your ‘rights’? Napoleon: Last question first. ‘A man will fight harder for his interests than for his rights.’ Secondly, by definition, ‘a leader is a dealer in hope.’ Ideally speaking, ‘the best way to keep one’s word is not to give it.’ However, it is a fact that ‘if you wish to be a success in the world, promise everything, deliver nothing.’

[Mitsotakis’s conservatives clinch landslide Greece election win](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2023/mitsotakis-s-conservatives-clinch-landslide-greece-election-win)

Moderator: One of our political leaders has just been sidelined. Besides his obvious enemies that he wittingly earned; his own aides have deserted him. They are the ones who never confronted him or pointed out his mistakes. Who is more dangerous? Our enemies or sycophants? Also, for our readers, tell us, would you accept defeat or simply prefer to die after defeat? Napoleon: ‘The people to fear are not those who disagree with you, but those who disagree with you and are too cowardly to let you know.’ As regards your second question, I must say that ‘death is nothing, but to live defeated and inglorious is to die daily.’ Truly, ‘it requires more courage to suffer than to die.’ I hasten to add that ‘he who fears being conquered is sure of defeat.’

Moderator: Pakistan happens to be one of the very few countries of the world wherein almost every leader tries to control the media and use religion as a ploy to woo the people. Your take on the importance of media and religion in today’s world of politics? Napoleon: ‘From the sublime to the ridiculous, there is but one step’. ‘Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.’ On the importance of religion in politics, briefly, I would say that ‘religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich.’

[Ukraine forces recapture new Russian-occupied settlement](https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Jun-2023/ukraine-forces-recapture-new-russian-occupied-settlement)

Moderator: One of the queries confronting our intelligentsia and even Supreme Court is about the leaked audio and video clips. Using such devices is but an essential element of espionage. Do you think such a practice is valid even in peacetimes? Napoleon: ‘Great ambition is the passion of a great character. Those endowed with it may perform very good or very bad acts. All depends on the principles which direct them.’ Secondly, to me, ‘a strong man is the one who can intercept at will the communication between the senses and the mind.’ Moderator: They say that after the crutches are removed, it is difficult for him to stand on his own feet. On the other hand, it is widely believed that being a smart politician, he can still bounce back even without anyone’s help. What is your take on this perception? Napoleon: ‘Ability is nothing without opportunity.’ Secondly, ‘glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever.’ Moderator: Last question. In the intangible ongoing power struggle in Pakistan, who do you think will have the last say? The ultimate winner? Napoleon: ‘Victory belongs to the most persevering.’ Furthermore, ‘the battlefield is a scene of constant chaos. The winner will be the one who controls that chaos, both his own and the enemy’s.’