

## NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE



Military general and first emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Ajaccio, Corsica, France. One of the greatest military commanders and a risk taking gambler; a workaholic genius and an impatient short term planner; a vicious cynic who forgave his closest betrayers; a misogynist who could enthrall men; Napoleon Bonaparte was all of these and more, the twice-emperor of France whose military endeavors and sheer personality dominated Europe in person for a decade, and in thought for a century. One of the most celebrated leaders in the history of the West; he revolutionized military organization and training, sponsored Napoleonic Code, reorganized education and established the long-lived Concordat with the papacy. The ideas that underpin our modern world—meritocracy, equality before the law, property rights, religious toleration, modern secular education, sound finances, and so on—were championed, consolidated, codified and geographically extended by Napoleon. To them he added a rational and efficient local administration, an end to rural banditry, the encouragement of science and the arts, the abolition of feudalism and the greatest codification of laws since the fall of the Roman Empire. Napoleon rapidly rose through the ranks of the military during the French Revolution (1789-1799). After seizing political power in France in a 1799 coup d'état, he crowned himself emperor in 1804. Shrewd, ambitious and a skilled military strategist, Napoleon successfully waged war against various coalitions of European nations and expanded his empire. However, after a disastrous French invasion of Russia in 1812, Napoleon abdicated the throne two years later and was exiled to the island of Elba. In 1815, he briefly returned to power in his Hundred Days campaign. After a crushing defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, he abdicated once again and was exiled to the remote island of Saint Helena, where he died at 51

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"Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet. Religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich."

— Napoleon Bonaparte



### **Where & when born**

Napoleon Bonaparte was born to Carlo Buonaparte, a lawyer and political opportunist, and his wife Marie-Letizia on August 15, 1769, in Ajaccio, Corsica, France. He was their 4th child and 3rd son

### **Brief history of the person**

The Buonaparte's were a wealthy family from the Corsican nobility, although when compared to the great aristocracies of France, Napoleon's kin were poor and pretentious. His father, Nobile Carlo Buonaparte, an attorney, was named Corsica's representative to the court of Louis XVI in 1777. The dominant influence of Napoleon's childhood was his mother, Letizia Ramolino, whose firm discipline restrained a rambunctious child. Napoleon was baptised as a Catholic. A combination of Carlo's social climbing, Letizia's adultery with the Comte de Marbeuf - Corsica's French military governor - and Napoleon's own ability enabled him to enter the military academy at Brienne in January 1779. He moved to the Parisian École Royale Militaire in 1784 and graduated a year later as a second lieutenant in the artillery. He was the first Corsican to graduate from the École Militaire. Upon graduating in September 1785, Bonaparte was commissioned a second lieutenant in La Fère artillery regiment. He served in Valence and Auxonne until after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, and took nearly two years' leave in Corsica and Paris during this period.

He spent the early years of the Revolution in Corsica, fighting in a complex three-way struggle among royalists, revolutionaries, and Corsican nationalists. He supported the Jacobin faction and gained command over a battalion of volunteers. Despite exceeding his leave of absence and leading a riot against a French army in Corsica, he was promoted to captain in the regular army in July 1792.

In July 1793, Bonaparte published a pro-republican pamphlet, *Le souper de Beaucaire* (Supper at Beaucaire), which gained him the support of Augustin Robespierre, younger brother of the Revolutionary leader Maximilien Robespierre. With the help of his fellow Corsican Antoine Christophe Saliceti, Bonaparte was appointed artillery commander of the republican forces at the siege of Toulon

Bonaparte became engaged to Désirée Clary, whose sister, Julie Clary, had married Bonaparte's elder brother Joseph. In April 1795, he was assigned to the Army of the West, which was engaged in the War in the Vendée—a civil war and royalist counter-revolution in Vendée, a region in west central France, on the Atlantic Ocean. As an infantry command, it was a demotion from artillery general—for which the army



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already had a full quota—and he pleaded poor health to avoid the posting

He was moved to the Bureau of Topography of the Committee of Public Safety and sought, unsuccessfully, to be transferred to Constantinople in order to offer his services to the Sultan. During this period, he wrote a romantic novella, *Clisson et Eugénie*, about a soldier and his lover, in a clear parallel to Bonaparte's own relationship with Désirée. On 15 September, Bonaparte was removed from the list of generals in regular service for his refusal to serve in the Vendée campaign. He faced a difficult financial situation and reduced career prospect.

On 3rd October, royalists in Paris declared a rebellion against the National Convention. Paul Barras, a leader of the Thermidorian Reaction, knew of Bonaparte's military exploits at Toulon and gave him command of the improvised forces in defence of the Convention in the Tuileries Palace.

The defeat of the royalist insurrection on 5th October 1795 extinguished the threat to the Convention and earned Bonaparte a sudden fame, wealth, and the patronage of the new government, the Directory. His brother-in-law; also served under Napoleon as one of his generals. Bonaparte was promoted to Commander of the Interior and given command of the Army of Italy.

Within weeks he was romantically attached to the former mistress of Barras, Joséphine de Beauharnais. The couple married on 9 March 1796 in a civil ceremony

Bonaparte won many battles from siege of Toulon in 1793 successively and in May 1798, Bonaparte was elected as a member of the French Academy of Sciences. His Egyptian expedition included a group of 167 scientists: mathematicians, naturalists, chemists and geodesists among them; their discoveries included the Rosetta Stone, and their work was published in the *Description de l'Égypte*.

During the Italian campaign, Bonaparte became increasingly influential in French politics; he founded two newspapers: one for the troops in his army and another for circulation in France. The royalists attacked Bonaparte for looting Italy and warned he might become a dictator. Bonaparte sent General Pierre Augereau to Paris to lead a coup d'état and purge the royalists on 4 September—Coup of 18 Fructidor. This left Barras and his Republican allies in control again but dependent on Bonaparte, who proceeded to peace negotiations with Austria. These negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Campo Formio, and Bonaparte returned to Paris in December as a hero. He met Talleyrand, France's new Foreign Minister—who would later serve in the same capacity for Emperor Napoleon—and they began to prepare for an invasion of Britain.

In 1801, Napoleon became President of the French Academy of Sciences and appointed Jean Baptiste Joseph Delambre its Permanent Secretary.

France and Britain signed the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802. This called for the withdrawal of British troops from most colonial territories it had recently occupied. Bolstered by this treaty, Napoleon was made First Consul for life in a 10 May plebiscite, with an implausible 99.8% voting in favour. His powers were



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increased by the Constitution of the Year including: Article 1. The French people name and the Senate proclaim Napoleon-Bonaparte First Consul for Life. After this he was generally referred to as Napoleon rather than Bonaparte

He was crowned by Pope Pius VII as Napoleon I, on 2 December 1804 at Notre Dame de Paris and then crowned Joséphine Empress.

At Milan Cathedral on 26 May 1805, Napoleon was crowned King of Italy with the Iron Crown of Lombardy.

Following his triumph with Prussia, Napoleon imposed the first elements of the Continental System through the Berlin Decree issued in November 1806. The Continental System, which prohibited European nations from trading with Britain, was widely violated throughout his reign.

Napoleon turned his focus to domestic affairs after the war of Fifth Coalition. Empress Joséphine had still not given birth to a child from Napoleon, who became worried about the future of his empire following his death. Desperate for a legitimate heir, Napoleon divorced Joséphine in January 1810 and started looking for a new wife. Hoping to cement the recent alliance with Austria through a family connection, Napoleon married the Archduchess Marie Louise, who was 18 years old at the time. On 20 March 1811, Marie Louise gave birth to a baby boy, whom Napoleon made heir apparent and bestowed the title of King of Rome. His son never actually ruled the empire, but historians still refer to him as Napoleon II.

Britain kept Napoleon on the island of Saint Helena in the Atlantic Ocean. In February 1821, Napoleon's health began to deteriorate rapidly. He reconciled with the Catholic Church. He died on 5 May 1821, after confession, Extreme Unction and Viaticum in the presence of Father Ange Vignali. His last words were, "France, l'armée, tête d'armée, Joséphine" ("France, army, head of the army, Joséphine")

### **In the Quest of conquering the world**

After Bonaparte was appointed artillery commander of the republican forces at the siege of Toulon, he forced the British to evacuate. He was promoted to brigadier general at the age of 24. Catching the attention of the Committee of Public Safety, he was put in charge of the artillery of France's Army of Italy

Carrying out Bonaparte's plan in the Battle of Saorgio in April 1794, the French army advanced to seize Ormea in the mountains. From Ormea, they thrust west to outflank the Austro-Sardinian positions around Saorge.

Given the command of the improvised forces in defence of the Convention in the Tuileries Palace, he ordered a young cavalry officer, Joachim Murat, to seize large cannons and used them to repel the attackers on 5 October 1795—13 Vendémiaire An IV in the French Republican Calendar. After 1,400 royalists died, the rest fled. He had cleared the streets with "a whiff of grapeshot".

When Bonaparte left Paris to take command of the Army of Italy on March 1796, he immediately went on the offensive, hoping to defeat the forces of Piedmont before their Austrian allies could intervene. In a



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series of rapid victories during the Montenotte Campaign, he knocked Piedmont out of the war in two weeks. When the Austrians launched a series of offensives against the French to break the siege, Napoleon defeated every relief effort, scoring notable victories at the battles of Castiglione, Bassano, Arcole, and Rivoli. The decisive French triumph at Rivoli in January 1797 led to the collapse of the Austrian position in Italy.

The next phase of the campaign featured the French invasion of the Habsburg heartlands. French forces in Southern Germany had been defeated by the Archduke Charles in 1796, but the latter withdrew his forces to protect Vienna after learning about Napoleon's assault. In the first notable encounter between the two commanders, Napoleon pushed back his opponent and advanced deep into Austrian territory after winning at the Battle of Tarvis in March 1797. Alarmed by the French thrust that reached all the way to Leoben, about 100 km from Vienna, the Austrians finally decided to sue for peace. The Treaty of Leoben, followed by the more comprehensive Treaty of Campo Formio, gave France control of most of northern Italy and the Low Countries, and a secret clause promised the Republic of Venice to Austria. Bonaparte marched on Venice and forced its surrender, ending 1,100 years of independence. He also authorized the French to loot treasures such as the Horses of Saint Mark.

When Napoleon decided on a military expedition to seize Egypt and thereby undermine Britain's access to its trade interests in India, en route to Egypt, Bonaparte captured Malta and an important naval base with the loss of only three men.

He fought the Battle of Shubra Khit against the Mamluks, Egypt's ruling military caste. This helped the French practice their defensive tactic for the Battle of the Pyramids, fought on 21 July, about 24 km from the pyramids. General Bonaparte's forces of 25,000 roughly equaled those of the Mamluks' Egyptian cavalry. Twenty-nine French and approximately 2,000 Egyptians were killed. The victory boosted the morale of the French army

In early 1799, he moved an army into the Ottoman province of Damascus (Syria and Galilee). Bonaparte led these 13,000 French soldiers in the conquest of the coastal towns of Arish, Gaza, Jaffa, and Haifa. The attack on Jaffa was particularly brutal: With his army weakened by disease—mostly bubonic plague—and poor supplies, Bonaparte was unable to reduce the fortress of Acre and returned to Egypt in May. To speed up the retreat, he ordered plague-stricken men to be poisoned. Back in Egypt, on 25th July, Bonaparte defeated an Ottoman amphibious invasion at Abukir.

The dispute between France and Britain, culminated in a declaration of war by Britain in May 1803, and he reassembled the invasion camp at Boulogne.

Napoleon sent an expedition under General Leclerc designed to reassert control over Sainte-Domingue. Although the French managed to capture Toussaint Louverture, the expedition failed when high rates of disease crippled the French army.

The Ulm Campaign is generally regarded as a strategic masterpiece and was influential in the development



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of the Schlieffen Plan in the late 19th century. Following the Ulm Campaign, French forces managed to capture Vienna in November. Napoleon said, "The battle of Austerlitz is the finest of all I have fought.

In September 1806, Napoleon invaded Prussia with 180,000 troops, rapidly marching on the right bank of the River Saale. At the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt, fought on October 14, the French convincingly defeated the Prussians and inflicted heavy casualties

Napoleon marched against the advancing Russian armies through Poland and was involved in the bloody stalemate at the Battle of Eylau in February 1807. On June 14, however, Napoleon finally obtained an overwhelming victory over the Russians at the Battle of Friedland, wiping out the majority of the Russian army in a very bloody struggle

Napoleon appointed his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as the new King of Spain in the summer of 1808.

November 1808 after clearing the last Spanish force guarding the capital at Somosierra, Napoleon entered Madrid on December 4 with 80,000 troops. He then unleashed his soldiers against Moore and the British forces. The British were swiftly driven to the coast, and they withdrew from Spain entirely after a last stand at the Battle of Corunna in January 1809. By 1814, after scores of battles and sieges throughout Iberia, the Allies had managed to push the French out of the peninsula.

After four years on the sidelines, Austria sought another war with France to avenge its recent defeats. By 17 May, the main Austrian army under Charles had arrived on the Marchfeld. A sustained Austrian artillery bombardment eventually convinced Napoleon to withdraw his forces back onto Lobau Island. Both sides inflicted about 23,000 casualties on each other. It was the first defeat Napoleon suffered in a major set-piece battle, and it caused excitement throughout many parts of Europe because it proved that he could be beaten on the battlefield

Napoleon finished off the battle with a concentrated central thrust that punctured a hole in the Austrian army and forced Charles to retreat. Austrian losses were very heavy, reaching well over 40,000 casualties. The French were too exhausted to pursue the Austrians immediately, but Napoleon eventually caught up with Charles at Znaim and the latter signed an armistice on 12 July.

There was a lull in fighting over the winter of 1812–13 while both the Russians and the French rebuilt their forces; Napoleon was then able to field 350,000 troops. Heartened by France's loss in Russia, Prussia joined with Austria, Sweden, Russia, Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal in a new coalition. Napoleon assumed command in Germany and inflicted a series of defeats on the Coalition culminating in the Battle of Dresden in August 1813.

Despite these successes, the numbers continued to mount against Napoleon, and the French army was pinned down by a force twice its size and lost at the Battle of Leipzig. This was by far the largest battle of the Napoleonic Wars and cost more than 90,000 casualties in total. The Allies offered peace terms in the Frankfurt proposals in November 1813. The Allies later had new, harsher terms that included the





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retreat of France to its 1791 boundaries, which meant the loss of Belgium. Napoleon would remain Emperor, however he rejected the term. The British wanted Napoleon permanently removed; they prevailed. Napoleon adamantly refused.

The Allied Powers having declared that Emperor Napoleon was the sole obstacle to the restoration of peace in Europe, Napoleon was then forced to announce his unconditional abdication.

In the Treaty of Fontainebleau, the victors exiled him to Elba, an island of 12,000 inhabitants in the Mediterranean, 20 km (12 mi) off the Tuscan coast. They gave him sovereignty over the island and allowed him to retain his title of emperor. Napoleon attempted suicide with a pill he had carried since a near-capture by Russians on the retreat from Moscow. Its potency had weakened with age, and he survived to be exiled while his wife and son took refuge in Austria. In the first few months on Elba he created a small navy and army, developed the iron mines, and issued decrees on modern agricultural methods.

Napoleon's forces fought the Coalition armies, commanded by the Duke of Wellington and Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, at the Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815. Wellington's army withstood repeated attacks by the French and drove them from the field while the Prussians arrived in force and broke through Napoleon's right flank.

Napoleon returned to Paris and found that both the legislature and the people had turned against him. Realizing his position was untenable, he abdicated on 22 June in favour of his son. He left Paris three days later and settled at Josephine's former palace in Malmaison (on the western bank of the Seine about 17 kilometres (11 mi) east of Paris).

When Napoleon heard that Prussian troops had orders to capture him dead or alive, he fled to Rochefort, considering an escape to the United States. However, British ships were blocking every port.

Finally, Napoleon demanded asylum from the British Captain Frederick Maitland on HMS Bellerophon on 15 July 1815 and died on 5th May 1821 in the island of Saint Helena.

### **Leadership qualities, Principles & Practices**

#### Trust, Loyalty with Discipline

Napoleon was a great motivator of people. He understood that a leader must win the trust of the people he is leading. His first time as commanding general was a testament to the leadership capabilities he possessed. His soldiers were in no condition to win any battles because they had been led by incompetent leaders and were ill kept. To add insult to injury, they hadn't been paid for their services in months since the country was almost broke at the time. When Napoleon arrived he changed everything.

"Soldiers, you are naked and ill fed. No fame shines upon you. I will lead you to the most fertile planes in the world...you will find there honor, glory and riches."

He first won the trust of his generals and then the loyalty of his soldiers by promising them victory and



glory. He was a very charismatic speaker and knew exactly how to motivate people.

After victories in Austria, Piedmont and Prussia, he would enter the major cities of those countries and win the hearts and devotion of many of the people by declaring that he was a representative of the Revolution. He would announce that he has no quarrels with the people but with the tyrants who have oppressed them. This ability to influence people was a major key to his success.

Napoleon's army not only fought for France, but they were entirely devoted to their commanding general and emperor thus making them almost impossible to stop. When the people you are leading are not only devoted to the cause, but also loyal to you, there is a heightened enthusiasm and effort that is put into the work.

Napoleon maintained strict, efficient work habits, prioritizing what needed to be done. The force of his personality neutralized material difficulties as his soldiers fought with the confidence that with Napoleon in charge they would surely win

### Do Things Differently

As a leader of armies and an emperor, Napoleon was always employing new ways to make things work. On the battle fields, most of the opposing armies were perplexed by his military strategies. They didn't know what to do to combat his maneuvers and formations. He also would fight at odd times of the day, consecutive days, in the snow, rain, sun, night, or whenever he believed he would have an advantage.

One great example of his ability to think differently was during the Battle of the Pyramids in Egypt. He was to face the Mamluks, an army of fearless and efficient Islamic killers. During this battle, Napoleon had his soldiers' line up in a big hollow square formation with the artillery and supplies in the center. The army then proceeded to rotate as the Mamluks attacked. This enabled his army to pick them off with unbelievable efficiency.

He was an innovator in using the financial, bureaucratic, and diplomatic resources of France. He could rapidly dictate a series of complex commands to his subordinates, keeping in mind where major units were expected to be at each future point, and like a chess master, "seeing" the best plays moves ahead.

### Thank Those Who Have Helped You Succeed

Napoleon understood that showing gratitude was a great way to gain the favor of the people. During his first military victory as a commanding general at Piedmonte, Napoleon would be seen as a generous leader. His army performed exceptionally well during those battles. It only took 2 weeks before the Piedmonte army realized they've had enough. After Piedmonte surrendered, He demanded gold and silver. Then he paid his soldiers using the gold and silver he obtained. This was the first real money the soldiers had seen in months.

Napoleon knew that if the soldiers felt appreciated they would perform with an intense sense of duty to





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their country and leader. The general would select the bravest man and Napoleon would take a medal off of his own coat and pin them on to the selected man. Can you imagine how that would spread through the camps?

### Get your Hands Dirty

Usually when the battles were over and the opposing army's guns fell silent, Napoleon would rise up sweaty, dirty and covered in gun powder. This won the respect of the men around him. They felt that he was one of them, that he really cared about what he was fighting for. He knew everyone else's job and would take on task that he could have easily delegated to someone else. Even though he was emperor he never lost sight of his responsibility to get the job done.

### Superior administer

He liberalised property laws, ended seigneurial dues, abolished the guild of merchants and craftsmen to facilitate entrepreneurship, legalised divorce, closed the Jewish ghettos and made Jews equal to everyone else. The Inquisition ended as did the Holy Roman Empire. The power of church courts and religious authority was sharply reduced and equality under the law was proclaimed for all men.

Napoleon's educational reforms laid the foundation of a modern system of education in France and throughout much of Europe.

### **Critical defeats and conspiracies against him.**

When Napoleon came into conflict with Paoli, who had decided to split with France and sabotage the French assault on the Sardinian island of La Maddalena. Bonaparte and his family fled to the French mainland in June 1793 because of the split with Paoli

Following the fall of the Robespierres in the Thermidorian Reaction in July 1794, one account alleges that Bonaparte was put under house arrest at Nice for his association with the brothers. Napoleon's secretary, Bourrienne, disputed this allegation in his memoirs. According to Bourrienne, jealousy between the Army of the Alps and the Army of Italy (with whom Napoleon was seconded at the time) was responsible. After an impassioned defense in a letter Bonaparte dispatched to representants Salicetti and Albitte, he was acquitted of any wrongdoing

In January 1804, his police uncovered an assassination plot against him which involved Moreau and which was ostensibly sponsored by the Bourbon former rulers of France. On the advice of Talleyrand, Napoleon ordered the kidnapping of Louis Antoine, Duke of Enghien, in violation of neighbouring Baden's sovereignty. After a secret trial the Duke was executed, even though he had not been involved in the plot

### **Historiography**

Napoleon has become a worldwide cultural icon who symbolises military genius and political power.

During the Napoleonic Wars he was taken seriously by the British press as a dangerous tyrant, poised to



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invade. He was often referred to by the British as Boney. A nursery rhyme warned children that Bonaparte ravenously ate naughty people; the "Bogeyman". In 1908 Alfred Adler, a psychologist, cited Napoleon to describe an inferiority complex in which short people adopt an over-aggressive behaviour to compensate for lack of height; this inspired the term Napoleon complex.

Napoleon's set of civil laws, the Code Civil—now often known as the Napoleonic Code—was prepared by committees of legal experts under the supervision of Jean Jacques Régis de Cambacérès, the Second Consul. Napoleon participated actively in the sessions of the Council of State that revised the drafts. The development of the code was a fundamental change in the nature of the civil law legal system with its stress on clearly written and accessible law. Other codes ("Les cinq codes") were commissioned by Napoleon to codify criminal and commerce law; a Code of Criminal Instruction was published, which enacted rules of due process.

The Napoleonic code was adopted throughout much of Europe, though only in the lands he conquered, and remained in force after Napoleon's defeat. Napoleon said: "My true glory is not to have won forty battles... Waterloo will erase the memory of so many victories. ... But... what will live forever is my Civil Code." The Code still has importance today in a quarter of the world's jurisdictions including in Europe, the Americas and Africa.

### Titles and styles

- 1769 – circa 1795: Noble Napoleon Buonaparte
- Circa 1795 – 1799: Napoleon Bonaparte
- 12 December 1799 – 18 May 1804: Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of the French Republic
- 18 May 1804 – 11 April 1814: His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the French
- 17 March 1805 – 11 April 1814: His Imperial and Royal Majesty the Emperor of the French, King of Italy
- 11 April 1814 – 20 March 1815: His Imperial Majesty the Sovereign of the Island of Elba
- 20 March 1815 – 22 June 1815: His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of the French

### Sources

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