

# DINA WADIA

## Passing away of Jinnah's only child

There was something remarkable about her—and with her passing, just about the last remaining link with South Asia's independence era leaders has been broken

ANDREW WHITEHEAD

DINA Wadia died on November 2, 2017 at the impressive age of 98. She was the only child of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan—though there was a breach between the two when she did as her father did and married a non-Muslim. She strenuously avoided public attention. But after five years of striving, I managed to meet her in her apartment off Madison Avenue in New York in September 2002. I was in the US to cover the first anniversary of 9/11, and Dina said I could come over. She lived in the sort of exclusive apartment building where you didn't get into the lobby, never mind beyond it, unless you were expected. She wouldn't allow me to record an interview—she insisted nothing should be on-the-record—she wouldn't permit herself to be photographed ... though she relented as I was leaving, and let me take a photo of a life-size, full-length



Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah with his sister Fatima (left) and daughter Dina Wadia.

COURTESY: DR GHULAM NABI KAZI

portrait of her painted in London in 1943 when she was expecting her son, the businessman Nusli Wadia. (Alas, the photo didn't come out too well.)

With her death I am released from the bonds of confidentiality—and while there's nothing particularly surprising about what she said, I can at least set it down.

I was struck as soon as she opened the door by her appearance. She was spry and petite, wearing bright red lipstick—and with her high cheekbones and aquiline nose, and somewhat imperious expression, she looked strikingly like her father.

Indeed, I remember the shock of that first glance upon her—her father's daughter.

Dina was charming and friendly. She showed me a photo of her beautiful mother, Rattanbai "Ruttie" Petit, a Parsi, who died when her daughter was nine. She was brought up largely by her maternal grandmother.

On her desk was a photo of her father. Yes, they had quarrelled over her marriage to Neville Wadia—who was born a Parsi but converted to Christianity—but they made up, and often spoke and wrote to each other. She says her father rang her from Delhi to say "We've got it!" when he won the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. Her own temperament and personality, she reckoned, came more

from her father than her mother.

Dina never made her home in Pakistan. She told me that Bombay was her city—though she has spent long periods in London as well as New York. She went to Pakistan for her father's funeral in 1948, and twice more to visit her aunt Fatima, Jinnah's sister, but when we met she hadn't set foot in Pakistan since Fatima's death in 1967.

She said she had been invited many times, by Benazir Bhutto and others, but had persistently refused—she didn't want to be used as a mascot. She complained of leaders who had "robbed" the country and warned that democracy hadn't flourished in any Muslim country. (Two years after we met, she did return to Karachi and visited her father's mausoleum as well as take part in a touch of cricket diplomacy.)

Dina ran through a checklist of independence era leaders—she had warm memories of Gandhi, who her father liked; she said that Sardar

Patel was "straight"; but she regarded Nehru as easily flattered and not her father's equal; while Mountbatten, she said, was simply "untrustworthy".

As for Jinnah's reputation, and the manner in which he is commemorated across Pakistan, she told me she didn't like the way her father was "worshipped".

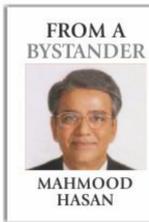
And with that I was ushered out—but the memory of the encounter has remained with me, I made notes as soon as I got back to my New York hotel room and I have them in front of me as I write.

I am sad to hear of her death. There was something remarkable about her—and with her passing, just about the last remaining link with South Asia's independence era leaders has been broken.

Dr Andrew Whitehead is an honorary professor at the University of Nottingham and a former editor of *History Workshop Journal*.

This article was originally published on Andrew Whitehead's blog.

# Will the "Myanmar democracy" survive the Rohingya crisis?



FROM A BYSTANDER

MAHMOOD HASAN

THESE are difficult times for Aung San Suu Kyi's democracy. The crisis is the creation of her xenophobic army chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

six of whom are military men—an in-built majority. Naturally, all important decisions have to be approved by the NDSC. The most dangerous provision in the constitution says that the military can retake powers of the government in case of threats to "national security" or "national unity"—essentially any time the junta wants.

Worst still, the military holds effective charge of three ministries—defence, home affairs and

failed to establish peace and unite the country. The entire anti-Rohingya narrative is based on lies, which has converted ethnic majority Bamars into ultra-nationalists.

To a large extent, the West is responsible for the current Rohingya crisis. As part of Pivot to Asia (i.e. containing China), President Obama visited Myanmar twice—in 2012 and 2014, when he met Suu Kyi. Though Rohingya persecution was ongoing at that time in Rakhine, Obama did not

However, the waiver of sanctions greatly overjoyed Hlaing. He waved the Suu Kyi flag to bring Myanmar out of pariah status and get readmitted into the comity of nations. The West was befuddled that democracy has returned to Myanmar and welcomed Suu Kyi with open arms, barely realising that she is a lame-duck head of government.

Clever Hlaing went ahead with his anti-Rohingya campaign, knowing well that his military's brutal actions will be blamed on Suu Kyi and not on him.

and Suu Kyi is on the back foot. Thousands of Bamar Buddhists rallied in Yangon on November 1, singing patriotic songs. Hlaing is seen as the saviour of Myanmar from Muslim takeover. This is bad news for Suu Kyi's democracy as the old political groups—USDP and allied parties—have become active.

Despite her popularity, Suu Kyi's moral capital is now in tatters. Instead of protesting the junta's brutality she went ahead to make that speech on September 19, 2017, which was clearly drafted by the junta. She denied any wrongdoing by the military and hid behind an "iceberg of misinformation"—to quote Suu Kyi herself. That speech actually undermined her integrity.

In her book *Freedom from Fear* Suu Kyi wrote, "It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it." How true. If only the lady could overcome the fear of losing power, she could probably save her brand of democracy from the quasi-military dictatorship and restore the rights of minorities, including Rohingyas. Ultra-nationalism and xenophobia have no place in democracies.

Myanmar as a country has the legal status of a sovereign state. But with its internal contradictions it is not yet a "nation". Nation-building requires embracing and integrating all people irrespective of race, religion and culture through ensuring human rights.

The paranoid junta does not want to see Suu Kyi succeed in establishing peace or democracy. Perception of threat to national security is the *raison d'être* of the military. According to observers, instability in Rakhine and international pressure can lead to a collapse of the Suu Kyi government and to the power vacuum being filled in by the military once again. If that happens, it will be the end of the "Myanmar democracy".

Mahmood Hasan is a former ambassador and secretary of the Bangladesh government.



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar armed forces, and Aung San Suu Kyi during Myanmar's top six-party talks at the Presidential Palace at Naypyidaw in 2015.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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However, as Hlaing went about committing genocide on the Rohingyas, Suu Kyi sided with the general in a show of unity. On other matters, however, she does not see eye to eye with Hlaing.

Strangely, both Suu Kyi and Hlaing are Islamophobes and are in sync in dealing with minority communities—the Shan, Karen, Kachin, Rohingyas, etc. Her handling of desperately poor but peaceful Rohingyas reflects her bigotry and her complicity, which has outraged world opinion. Her prejudices became clear during the 2015 election, when NLD did not field any Muslim candidate from any seat.

Myanmar's so-called democratic government is a forked administration—Suu Kyi's powerless civilian government and the junta-led ministries independent of Suu Kyi. This disconnect between Suu Kyi and Hlaing has brought the core issue to the fore—that of democracy versus military dictatorship.

The powers enjoyed by Suu Kyi as state counsellor are at best tenuous under the military-drafted 2008 constitution. The constitution debarred her from becoming president and she knew that she could not amend the draconian provisions of the constitution given the seat arithmetic in the parliament. Yet she went ahead to play the game laid out by the military.

Not only can she not change the charter, the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) is the Damocles' sword over her head. This most powerful body has 11 members,

border control—all led by serving generals. The home ministry has taken over the responsibilities of immigration and population, making it very powerful. Suu Kyi's government also does not control the police, justice system, security services and ethnic issues.

Expulsion of the Rohingyas has been the military's plan since 1962, when General Ne Win seized power after the parliamentary democracy experiment

ask Naypyidaw to stop the oppression. Rather to encourage Suu Kyi's democracy, President Obama overlooked the gross human rights violations committed by the military and lifted the economic sanctions in October 2016. Now, geopolitical games involving India, China, US, Russia and Japan over Rakhine are putting pressures on Suu Kyi's government, while the expelled Rohingyas wait to return home from Bangladesh.

Thus the latest attacks on Rohingyas in 2016 and 2017. He cared little about Suu Kyi's reputation or credibility. Hlaing's glee has now turned sour as the Trump administration has started to reverse Obama's Myanmar policies. Hlaing's impunity may not last long. Little did he foresee that world opinion would go against him.

Interestingly, as international pressure mounts on Hlaing, his popularity has surged within Myanmar,

**A WORD** **A DAY**

**E XURBIA**  
**NOUN**

A residential area outside of a city and beyond suburbia

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Tread noisily
- 6 Get up
- 10 Debussy opus
- 11 Gather together
- 13 Mirror sight
- 14 Tongue setting
- 15 Fellow
- 16 Salsa or guacamole
- 18 Auto
- 19 Fancy hotel room
- 22 Ram's mate
- 23 Entreated
- 24 Amber or myrrh
- 27 Deep chasm
- 28 Preceding nights
- 29 To's counterpart
- 30 Happy tinged with sadness

**DOWN**

- 1 Ascend
- 2 Truman's Missouri hometown
- 3 Muscat native
- 4 Ryan of "Top Gun"
- 5 Early
- 6 Highway exits
- 7 "As I see it," online
- 8 In a cheeky
- 9 Fancy homes
- 12 Tatters
- 17 - de la Cite
- 20 Religious rationalist
- 21 Violin stroke
- 24 Money-back offer
- 25 Plain to see
- 26 Preordained time
- 27 Weapons cache
- 29 Cal. column
- 31 Tennis legend
- Chris
- 32 Roof edges
- 33 Wild, as strength
- 34 Midterms, for example
- 39 Kinsey subject
- 41 In the way of

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

TUNA BAGS  
MOREL ELECT  
ATBAT TERRA  
SEAPORT MAC  
TUN SEAHAWK  
SPATAT ONLY  
EXITS  
ANTE TITHEID  
SEASALT AMI  
KEN SEALION  
EDGES NOLTE  
DELVE IDEES  
DEES AIDS

**BEETLE BAILEY** BY MORT WALKER

BEETLE BAILEY: AH! A CAMPFIRE SURE KEEPS YOU NICE AND WARM!  
SARGE: AND IT KEEPS THE ANIMALS AWAY!  
BEETLE BAILEY: ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?  
SARGE: GREEN! JUCK! WALKER!

**BABY BLUES** BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

BOY: HEY DAD, CAN I GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY?  
DAD: SURE.  
BOY: IT'S RAINING, SO TAKE AN UMBRELLA AND A JACKET.  
DAD: GOOD IDEA!  
BOY: BBBBBBBBBBBB!