This past year has witnessed India and Pakistan bat- tling over an area that has known little peace since 1947. While the two states speak of ‘nationalism’, ‘secularism’ and various other organizational calls for jihad, most Kashmiris speak of ‘self-determination’ and ‘Kashmiri identity’. The idea of self-determination and Kashmiri identity evolved in 1947 by the last Hindu Dogra Maharaja, Hari Singh. The concept of a distinct Kashmiri identity (kashmiriyat) is a notion that goes back to Hari Singh. The concept of self-determination was formally proposed in 1947 by the last Hindu Dogra Maharaja, Hari Singh. The concept of a distinct Kashmiri identity (kashmiriyat) evolved in the 1930s with the movement of the Kashmiri intelligentsia, against feudal-cum-romantic rule. The notion of a discrete Kashmiri citizenship goes back to the 1920s, when an agitation for independence from Punjab Hindus was pressed for a formal definition of ‘state subjects’.

With South Asian decolonization and the creation of Pakistan and India in 1947, the Kashmiri identity politics gained importance. It demanded political recognition, especially by the unilaterally poor rural Valley Muslims and the mercantile classes. The idea of self-determination and the emergence of religion as a factor in 1972, following the third Indo-Pakistan war and the formation of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan signed the ‘Simla Accord’, explicitly recognizing the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The idea of self-determination and the emergence of religion as a factor in 1972, following the third Indo-Pakistan war and the formation of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan signed the ‘Simla Accord’, explicitly recognizing the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The idea of self-determination and the emergence of religion as a factor in 1972, following the third Indo-Pakistan war and the formation of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan signed the ‘Simla Accord’, explicitly recognizing the wishes of the Kashmiri people.

The election, the Indian Congress Party ensured the Jamma’at-ul Islam (JUI) victory against the NC. The elections were marred and won only one seat in the first and last free elections in 1977, but it was enacting a fund with an invasion and contempt for non-Muslims in schools in villages where state schools were often seen as rambunctious only nominally. Hindu fundamentalists now also began incorporating a brand of Hinduism entirely alien to Kashmir. Between 1990 and 1996 the Valley witnessed no communal riots, but its democracy was traded for a hammering. With arms and money flowing in, factionalism was discarded and replaced by more ‘liberal’ forms of their respective religions. The ‘religious’ terms by all concerned, and in- creasingly Kashmiris increasingly considered pro- Congress, hence pro-India and thus anti- Kasmir, Kashmiri identity became synonymous with Kashmiri Muslim identity.

Resorting to arms
Indian policy now changed from co-op- tion to confrontation, and in 1987 the Mus- lim United Front (MUF), a conglomeration of opposition groups voted for by some 60% of the electorate, the Congress played the ‘religious’ role, repeatedly giving in to blackmail by the Congress, the JI, the JUI, the JSF to fight their own battles in Kashmir. To curb in-fighting, many militant organiza- tions, including the JI and the JLF, formed the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) with the common objective of press- ing for ‘self-determination’ and the establish- ment of a society that is in keeping with Islamic and values. By spring 1999 there was a re- al peace in the Valley, with hundreds of armed ex-militants from various groups em- ployed by the Government to take up fighting. And the timeline of this year was 1980, Dr Aparna Rao is a social anthropologist who has been conducting research on Kashmir since 1980, and has published extensively on the area.