We provide systematic empirical evidence on factors that successfully mobilized one of the world's first non-violent mass movements in favor of democratic self-government, using novel data from an unlikely venue for such collective action: poor, ethnically-diverse South Asia. We show that residents of exports-producing districts that were negatively impacted by inter-war trade shocks, including the Depression, were more likely to support India's Independence Movement in 1937 and 1946 and more likely to engage in violent insurrection in 1942. Further, we show how the nature of mobilization changed dramatically from non-violent to violent immediately after the Movement's leadership was arrested, particularly in districts endowed with a smaller grassroots organizational presence.

We interpret these results as reflecting the role of two factors: trade shocks in forging a mass movement by reconciling agrarian exporters with the Movement's offer of protectionism, land reform and democracy, and an innovative organizational structure, that selected its leaders based upon public sacrifice rather than wealth, in keeping the mass protests peaceful.

Professor Bhavnani’s research and teaching focus on inequalities in political representation and corruption among politicians, particularly in South Asia. Other projects examine the effects of migration on political participation and violence in India, the role of the Great Depression in helping India, Pakistan and Bangladesh secure their political independence, the selection and impact of leaders, and the effects of foreign aid on economic growth. His research is characterized by a close attention to causality and by interests in political and economic development. His papers have been published in the *American Political Science Review* and *The Economic Journal*. 

Thursday, September 18, 2014
206 Ingraham Hall
Noon - 1pm

This event is free and open to the public! Samosas will be served!