Problematizing the People Power Revolution

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As this article is being written, the Philippines marks the 20th anniversary of the EDSA\(^1\) or “people power” revolution that unseated Ferdinand Marcos from power.\(^2\) This was a singular political moment that many think spurred revolutionary changes in the world order in the following years — such as the victory of Solidarność in Poland, and the protest in Tiananmen Square, both events occurring in 1989. To others, it represents the first nonviolent movement (and, to some, the first Christian movement) that successfully and directly overthrew a government. Many observers trace these worldwide upheavals to two days in 1986 when more than a million Filipinos did little more than stand in the middle of a street and speak the truth against a fascist regime. In the following account, we will refer to this movement as, simply, “EDSA.”

This series of notes is meant to address a fundamental gap, which is that the EDSA revolution has not, to date, been treated theoretically. It has been addressed, numerous times, in descriptive fashion from a historicist point of view, or made to fit certain ideological templates (such as a neo-colonialist lens popular among local academics), which provide arbitrary portrayals of the event but not analysis. In fact, the most common lens is exemplified by the name, “people power,” which

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\(^1\) EDSA is the colloquial term used to refer to Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, the site of the standoff. As an historical footnote, Epifanio de los Santos was associate editor of *La Independencia*, the literary voice of the revolutionary movement against the Spaniards in the late 19th century.

is that a populist movement sought to win back freedom from an oppressive tyrant. However, these serve to describe the event according to the needs of their writers, instead of analyzing the origins, dynamic, and mechanisms of the event. So the first reason behind this proposal is, simply, that EDSA has been under-theorized. The second follows closely, and that it is simply an enormously historic event — as a revolution of sorts, of the kind that should yield us rich insights into the origins and progressions of social movements. It is these events that need to be treated theoretically, in the same manner as the French and, to a lesser extent, the American, revolutions have been — as great sociological experiments that cannot but shape succeeding movements elsewhere.\(^3\)

EDSA has not been systematically treated in analysis. By analysis, we refer to a mode of theoretical inquiry that attempts to address questions such as the following:

(a) How does the movement spur individuals to action? Through what cognitive and social mechanisms did EDSA accomplish this?

(b) What transformations in identity, cultural knowledge, or political construction did the EDSA movement engender?

(c) How did contingencies of events leading up to those days cohere with transformations in consciousness and action? How did this all contribute to a swelling of action? What were the key “ingredients” of social change, and how did these cohere in the case of EDSA?

(d) What was the power of this particular movement? Why and how did political transformation become inevitable?

(e) What social and political ingredients differentiate EDSA from succeeding, unsuccessful movements in the Philippines and other movements elsewhere? How do these differences in constitution affect the

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action and dynamic of these social movements? What are the most salient dimensions of differentiation?

(f) What is it that we can distill from EDSA that is needed to inform present-day movements at social reform? In other words, why do present efforts seem to stall? What was the “magic” of the EDSA movement, and is it replicable?

(g) There is a need to theorize the linkages between one movement to another in a networked world. Specifically, how did EDSA lend to later movements (Poland, Beijing, etc.)? What global conditions allowed for such norm diffusion, and more elementally, was there a norm being shared and what was it?

(h) What refinements in extant models of social movements and collective action are needed in order to adequately explain EDSA?

(i) Can we trace the outcomes of the event to the nature and dynamic of the social movement itself?

This set of notes is a proposal to begin generating various analytical treatments of EDSA, subjecting it to the scrutiny of differing theoretical lenses in a systematic way. The hope is that we might, over time, assemble a number of careful analyses of this social movement and so create a foundational monograph of sorts (the EDSA papers). However, before we can embark on this extended analysis, we need to problematize EDSA — that is, to show what elements of this social movement are difficult to explain using extant constructs without significantly refining or adding to some of these theories. This is also the promise of this case study in that there is, in it, the potential to further our theories of social movements in a significant way. Problematizing this movement also means to show why this is a singular case that exceeds the limits of any one of the extant theories. Put another way, EDSA tests the power of these theories to explain elements of greatest interest surrounding this movement. As we will discuss in the next section, EDSA poses a problem for theory and requires a systematic theoretical undertaking in order to work out some resolutions to these problems. To the extent that EDSA does not fit neatly within the explanations of extant theories of social movements allows us the opportunity to propose refinements.
to these same theories. Let us briefly state some of the basic problems:

(i) The literature on social movements provides us with considerable descriptive devices with which to portray EDSA. However, this diverse literature is still wanting for explanations of sufficient power to enable us to understand what it was that spurred collective action, in the case of EDSA.

(ii) Particular problems include the fact that the mass movement was of a categorically different nature than the preceding organizing that many use to characterize the social movement. But the EDSA phenomenon was, in fact, more of a spontaneous, unorganized mass uprising, and the events of EDSA run counter to the logic of lenses such as political opportunity. They also contradict some of the assumed characteristics of social networks, which most often assume a more-or-less rationally driven pattern of interdependence, whereas EDSA's ethic may most deeply be characterized as *self-emptying* rather than *rational* (as will be discussed).

(iii) Even more complex theories of collective action and rationality, even including non-material benefits, seem inadequate for explaining the ineffable imperative (given risks that were incalculable, at the time) to

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action on the part of individuals, most of whom did not actively participate in the social movement prior to the event.

(iv) Social movement theories that base the origins of movements on identify formation and socio-cultural identity do not explain what identity-centered phenomena occurred around EDSA, and how the transformation of identity links to individual and group action.

(v) The extant lenses to not provide thorough explanations to the question, “How does a social movement change government?”

(vi) Though numerous rationales have been offered for the failure of the EDSA revolution to lead to progressive improvements in the quality of life of the Filipino, there has to date not been a thorough analysis that tries to trace the outcomes (short-term and long) of the revolution to the social movement itself.

(vii) EDSA, in the complex tide of events, was simply utterly unpredictable. Could we then hope to explain it ex post as a predictable result of elements?

(viii) The supposedly nonviolent nature of change at EDSA needs to be problematized also. What is different about a social movement that, among few in history, overturned a government through nonviolent means? Or was it indeed nonviolent? Could not violence have been still a pretext for the whole movement (to wit: the embodied potential for violent force implicit in a situation where you had tanks on the one side and more than a million bodies on the other)?
(ix) The religious element also needs to be problematized. The most visible socio-cultural element during EDSA was the Christian — more specifically, the Catholic, as evidenced by the ubiquity of images of the Blessed Virgin. Can religion be thought of as simply a moral force that binds people to certain positions and actions? Or is it simply a mode of social coordination that acts like any ideology or groupthink? Or was EDSA something that could only have occurred in a Catholic community — if so, why? In other words, is there such a thing as a Christian polity? Why could a Christian movement be channeled to the needs of the poor?

(x) Is it true that EDSA was a middle-class movement? That is, were elites and the poor central to the movement? Why did not the needs of the poor enter more centrally into the narrative of EDSA, and the ensuing restructuring of government?

(xi) Most broadly, what does the EDSA phenomenon add to the theory of social movements?

As we will discuss in the next section, at a sufficient enough level of abstraction, extant theoretical lenses can be used to portray EDSA. However, at their levels of conceptualization, we are not able to answer most of the aforementioned questions. Moreover, they do not seem to provide ways to deeply understand phenomena on the most immediate level (that of individual action) and the most sociological (that of societal transformation). As will be developed later in this proposal, we maintain that it is necessary to systematically employ multiple lenses of theorization, and find some planes of coherence among these, in order to deeply explain the EDSA revolution. It is also possible, as we will discuss later in these notes, for EDSA to provide some grounds for sketching altogether novel theoretical constructs.
Collective Action and Theories of Social Movements

Let us first sketch some notes on extant theories of collective action and social movements, in order to subsequently discuss the particular theoretical problems posed by EDSA. The notion of a social movement was constructed in order to better study initiatives and social action that came not from formal, well-defined institutions (e.g., political parties, civic organizations). Rather, these movements drew people from across institutional boundaries, reestablished new associations, and challenged clear cut organizational delineations. Parallel to the discovery of these movements was a concerted scholarly effort to describe such nontraditional alliances using the language of social networks.\textsuperscript{7} What is most interesting about these social movements is that they not only had the capacity for sustaining collective action but they were capable of achieving sometimes revolutionary socio-political change. One need only to consider the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1950s or fundamentalist reform in Iran in the 1970s to realize the great capacity of these nondescript, nontraditional alliances for reconfiguration entire social and political landscapes.

The broad scope of this area of study necessitates rather broadly-construed theoretical boundaries. For example, Meyer and Rochon describe social movements as “comprised of coalitions of actors, acting on some element of shared goals, and competing for prominence in defining claims and tactics.”\textsuperscript{8} Della Porta and Diani identify four common features of these movements, mainly the emergence of informal interaction networks, shared beliefs and solidarity, a focus on political or cultural areas of conflict, and the use of various mechanisms for protest.\textsuperscript{9} These descriptions do not constitute coherent theories, of course, since they do not yet explain how movements arise, how they operate and grow, and how they lead to social and political change. To do the latter, researchers have assembled a large number of intriguing

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.


case studies that show how social movements worked out in their individual, specific ways.

Gamson reasons that social movements frame social situations in a way as to construct three salient dimensions: injustice, agency, and identity. That is, to be successful, a social movement has to be able to portray the relevant group(s) as having a common grievance against the status quo.\textsuperscript{10} Then, the movement has to point out avenues for voice action instead of simply being silent and accommodating or, even, to escape to other less-oppressive places.\textsuperscript{11} Lastly, the movement must be able to define an identity for members of the movement, both collective identity and personal. Though these concepts are most immediately relevant to the task of describing social movements, to some extent, they help us theorize about mechanisms for their action and effect on both societal and personal levels.

Regarding the element of identity, it is held that processes of construction of collective identity are integral to the evolution of collective action.\textsuperscript{12} This framework has the advantage of going beyond purely macroscopic, structural analyses and into the evolution of meaning of what the collective stands for. It calls as such for analyses that can point out and describe the process of identity construction. Moreover, it requires the analysis of what exactly is defined as the collective subject and what values and interests it represents.\textsuperscript{13} The focus is not merely “what” objectives people rally around but “who” they are as a solidarity. The dynamic process by which the boundaries are drawn between the group and the other can then be examined closely. The additional question, which is most pertinent to EDSA, is how the new identity then translates to a realization of collective agency. The question exists, too, regarding how commonalities can be drawn (sufficient to engender common action) when identities happen to be


\textsuperscript{13} Touraine, 1981.
multiplex, shifting, and unavoidably complex? Surely, this is the case found in the Philippine situation. In the case of EDSA, how did the movement negotiate the distance between the diversity of the polity and need to consolidate resistance?

Relevant, too, are theories about how movements, once underway, actually effect political change. Of the most salient theories is that of political opportunity.14 According to these frameworks, there need to exist some salient elements before the movement can effect change. While the literature comes up against the as yet irresolvable heterogeneity in the set of explanatory variables, some elements are commonly found: civic culture, degree of repression, social cohesion, distribution of power, the repertoire of available actions, and others. Kurt Schock has used this framework to analyze the EDSA movement.15 In this analysis, Schock seeks the agglomeration of a sufficiently powerful coalition of players in the movement to unseat Marcos.

The opportunity for voice is seen by some as the most salient ingredient for the evolution of the movement. Azada and Hermida, in particular, see the years following the assassination of Benigno Aquino as a freeing up of communicative spaces that allowed the social movement to congeal.16 In this framework, the movement needed democratic space to be able to already present seeds of action to coalesce. Some theorists point to the differing degrees of political “openness” of the system to explain how movements are generated. For example, an open system with many opportunities for ongoing political involvement of diverse groups allows for the continuous reform of institutions. In such a system, the greater the ease by which movements can form and effect


16 Cf. Rowena Azada and Ranilo Hermida, “‘People Power’ Revolution: Perspectives from Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas.”
change. In contrast, a closed system with a centralized state control of resources and decisions, creates a situation where movements are slow to coalesce but extreme (and sometimes violent) in action (Geary, 1981; Goldstein, 1983). However, this logic can be questioned in societies where both degree of openness and the repertoire of actions are much more complex.

We also need to consider the cognitive explanation of social movements as rational behavior on the part of individuals. Beginning with the paradox of individual membership (in the face of the possibility of free riding on others' efforts) that was posed by Olson (1968), theorists have needed to broaden the notion of rationality to include 'benefits' that go beyond the material, individual, and utilitarian. The basic idea is that there must be sufficient incentives at a personal level (be it material incentives or solitary, affective ones) to coerce each to make the effort (that is, incur the "cost") to join the movement. A number point to the need to include within the scope of rationality elements such as collective values (Oliver, 1984, Opp. 1988) or of emotion and loyalty (see Scheff, 1994; Jasper and Paulsen, 1995). Other authors, however, contend that to so broaden utility to include these complex factors really speaks to the inappropriateness of the rational model to explain social movements (Fireman and Gamson, 1979; Ferree, 1992). A thorough analysis of EDSA needs to contend with the question of personal incentives, however defined. More macroscopic notions of rationality are even more basic, as it first needs to be shown that, even if not on an individual level, does the collective stand to gain? In the case of the Philippines of 1986, for example, was there a serious downturn in the economy that necessitated change (or, alternatively, were conditions good enough prior to this so as to allow maintenance of the Marcos regime)?

Most recently, some writers have more deeply examined the necessary linkages of movements to the political policy process. However, there

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18 Meyer, David, "Protest and Political Opportunity," *Annual Review of Sociology*
is a need for more explicit connections between the work on social movements and political-economic theories of collective action. This article will sketch steps in these directions. In the next section, we use these same conceptual models and discuss why the EDSA case study is problematic, as far as these are concerned, and why new analytical work is required.

Theoretical Problems Posed by EDSA

What is wanting in the theory of EDSA? We can describe it as the liberation of a people from a tyrant, which does not begin to explain many things. It does not explain why, given that there are many situations of tyranny and many oppressed the world over, this was able to take place at that time and in that manner? Why did previous attempts at mass movements fail and this succeed? Why did the movement succeed, whereas efforts stemming from Aquino's assassination did not? What was the nature of the "spark" that moved people to take action?

There is the moral explanation. The nation just could not stand it any longer, and moral convictions overwhelmed risk aversion, and the people just had to act. However, there just being a moral rationale for an action does not explain why the action takes place and succeeds and what elements made the movement effective whereas others were not. Moral indignation was probably greater in 1983, after Ninoy's assassination. Beyond that, simply saying that the people did what was "right" still does not get to Olson's dilemma — what, if moral or other explanation, overcomes individual unwillingness to act, and how is this overcome? Why does the tendency to free-ridership not hold in this case? Also, what strategic or other factors made this movement work? How was individual initiative coordinated into a mass movement? And even if we are convinced of the moral argument, what was the moral argument, anyway, and how was it expressed? Why did this argument resonate with people, whereas others did not?

There is also the elitist, neo-colonialist argument that EDSA was merely the removal of an old, embarrassing puppet regime by the
national and global elite (most notably, the U.S.A., it being the global hegemon) for a more palatable one. However, why did the movement take elites and global superpower by surprise? Note that, in fact, almost up to the brink of EDSA, the Reagan administration was still ostensibly trying to salvage the Marcos regime.\textsuperscript{19} Why would it spur a movement that was, for the most part, non-elitist in the manner it played out? We note the simple fact that the people who stood in front of the tanks were exactly not the members of the elite, the recognized political opposition, or political actors but really many of the nameless individuals. EDSA did not involve the traditional Left, but somewhat ironically led to the freeing and rejuvenation of the Left (symbolized by Cory Aquino’s freeing the head of the national Communist Party). For these and other reasons, EDSA defies classification as an elitist, rightist transition, but neither can it be understood as a mass, proletariat uprising. Many analysts boil it down to a movement of the Philippine middle class, which, while too reductionistic, is a valid point. A number of theories (post-colonial, Marxist) posit change as originating from either right or left, but not the middle as was EDSA. The Church might be thought of as constituting part of the “elite” (or, alternatively, part of the “left”; but these exercises of classification hardly matter), but we should reflect on the fact that the Marcos regime, while thieving and brutal, was no threat to the institution of the Church per se (in fact, Imelda Marcos was probably quite the patron in the matter of religious projects and edifices).

We turn to more complex theories of social movements and assess why EDSA remains problematic. The first requirement of a social movement is that of a common bond, a common identity, and a sense of the collective. These are easily identified, in EDSA, on the most immediate plane of analysis (to wit: we the oppressed). However, we need to work out what constituted this identity. What was the overweening narrative that knit the collective together from the diverse and fractured Philippine society? Was it simply, we the oppressed? But feelings of oppression have been ever present in Philippine society even

before it became a nation — Spain oppressed it for three centuries, and Filipinos responded with mostly tolerance and subservience. Perhaps it was not just oppression. In short, can we construct a thorough, overarching narrative that spelled the new movement?

Along with this, can we identify the new identities being constructed around this narrative? How did groups understand themselves in new ways that they did not before? How did individuals redefine their personal identities in new ways? All this is unclear, as these have never been explicated around EDSA. Moreover, it is as yet unclear how these new identities were generated in the years preceding EDSA. Evidently, judging from the people on the streets, such a set of identities allowed diverse groups to realize commonalities or to overlook differences between groups. Was there an evolutionary phase for these identities to evolve? Was there a coherent vision, and did this vision go beyond simply getting rid of Marcos?

The notion of political context and opportunity suffices to explain some aspects of EDSA, but not others. True, the oppressive Marcos regime suffocated public discourse and, so, necessitated a sudden, extreme revolt. True, also, in the years preceding 1986, there was some freeing up of democratic space (especially around free speech) that allowed more and more vocal protests without violent reprisal — this presumably allowed the more efficient coalescence of the anti-Marcos movement. And, yet, we see, prior to those four days in February, 1986, a public that was, largely, inactive. While there were more public displays of activism, the politically engaged tended not to be the mass of people who actually manned their posts at EDSA. There just was not a broad collective that was being formed, as far as one could discern, unless this occurred in a completely latent manner (that is, in the internalization of the norm) — this runs counter to the public nature that social movements are supposed to take, however. The exercise of civic liberties prior to 1986 was limited to the most visible members of the opposition (e.g., ATOM, the August Twenty-One Movement), and for the most part, it seemed as if society were to continue with its grudging acceptance of the totalitarian rule as it had in previous years. One could not see the collective being formed. There were no strong connections being made between groups in society. It is also quite interesting, when one looks at pictures of the scene at EDSA, that the people who actually were standing in front of the tanks, were exactly
those who were not visible members of the activist movement. The absence of other than those nameless faces is, in fact, one of the unique elements of EDSA that have not been seen since (noting that present-day attempts to conjure up EDSA are characterized by the ubiquity of political entrepreneurs on the frontlines — but not so in 1986).

And, yet, in 1986 it all happened. What was different about 1986 that did not happen in previous years? Was it the first taste of an almost free election? Was it merely the precipitous confluence of events — mere coincidence as it were? We realize that we can characterize EDSA using all the elements identified in the social movement literature (common bonds, informal networks, and repertoires of protest) without at all explaining what was the “magic” of those days that took people to the streets and brought a government down, and what were the elements of that “magic”? Or was EDSA such a singular event that the extant social movement theories, drawn from other largely European and American experiences, do not capture it?

EDSA raises questions regarding motivation. Like the French and American revolutions, it was a reaction to tyranny. It was not, as in the French revolution, about redress of the grievances of the poor. It was not, as in the American revolution, about nation building. EDSA was ostensibly framed as a defense of rebellious soldiers, hiding out in their camps. If this is the way the call to the streets was understood, why should such an appeal resonate with the people? In particular, consider how the two persons that people were rallying to protect, Ramos and Enrile, were not particularly endeared to them, were widely seen as Marcos cronies, and were rather vilified for their participation in the Martial Law regime.

And, furthermore, why did this movement not result in violence? There was, as in the French revolution, the urgency of necessity as the poor had decided to rail against their condition. If this was indeed purely a middle class movement, why was it so, and what constitutes the “middle” anyway, in a nation where 40% of the people fall below the poverty line? Why did the urgencies of necessity not insert themselves into this movement? One easy answer is, unlike previous revolutions, this one reversed the separation of Church and State, but this is a tenuous proposition that raises other and really similar

questions. Why would the Church not rally the people around freedom and, specifically, freedom from poverty? Is it more apropos for people to suffer from poverty than from tyranny? Whatever the message was, why did it resonate then, not before, not henceforth? Was the Church really so central to the movement? One recalls how, little more than a decade after EDSA, people would take to the streets (in what has been called EDSA 2) to rally against now deposed President Estrada, in a movement that Church leaders (the Cardinal and others) did not call for. What moves this people, and what prevents such motion from restoring broken institutions, in a word, from nation-building?

Do rationalist theories help us understand EDSA? On a societal level, was it simply the downturn in the economy that led society to finally reject Marcos? This is questionable, for various reasons. For example, though there was a downturn in employment and income prior to 1986, this was by no means extraordinary (in fact, exceeded in severity several times since). On an individual level, this is even more problematic. Was the prospect of a better life for one’s own enough to send people out into the streets? Were the incentives to lash out for freedom so great for the individual so as to goad her to action? But why now? What sudden change in the moral calculus led to EDSA? And, in the face of the nun standing in front of a moving tank, all arguments about rational calculation seem to fail. (Interviews with some of these suggest they really did not know if the tanks would roll to a stop.) Surely, solidary benefits do not suffice to rationalize such a level of sacrifice.

Moreover, the confluence of many political preconditions for change fail to account for the basic facelessness of EDSA. There were political entrepreneurs, but they were not the ones to be seen on the frontlines. Cory Aquino was, for the most part, missing. The members of the coup were tucked away in the camps. Leaders of the various, large opposition groups were simply missing from pictures of the scene, overtaken by the many nameless. We note that this is absent from subsequent attempts at reconvening EDSA. But, again, how and why did this occur in 1986? In theorizing EDSA, we have to grapple with, first, the inadequacy of structural explanations. EDSA defies depiction in traditional classist terms, or as economic rationality, or in terms of a global hegemon. On the other hand, appealing to notions of agency founders under the recession of leadership and political entrepreneurs into the background, giving way to the phenomenon of facelessness.
that characterized EDSA. To simply say that we need elements of both structure and agency to explain EDSA does nothing to resolve our difficulty — how do we go about this?

On the other hand, one might attempt to explain EDSA as simply the moral prerogative of liberation translating into an inexorable force for liberation. In this light, it is tempting to conclude that, once convinced of this imperative, the people simply galvanized its resolve to overthrow the Marcos government. EDSA was inevitable, in this account. But this does not account for the actual unfolding of events, however. We need to come to grips with the role that political entrepreneurship did play. We are reminded that, after all, EDSA was sparked by a failed coup d'état by political entrepreneurs. Without these political machinations, would EDSA have occurred? In the language of social movement theory, did the repertoire of actions included in the social movement be powerful enough so that the downfall of the regime would have been inevitable regardless of whether the events on the corner of EDSA and Boni Serrano Streets had occurred or not? This is unclear. Prior to those days in February, 1986, the repertoire of actions did not include simply shutting down EDSA, the main thoroughfare, and forcing a standoff. There was no idea of an “EDSA revolution” just needing a mass of people to rally around it. EDSA was simply unpredicted. Theory needs to address these questions, even if in a speculative manner. As we discuss further in this proposal, we believe that we can do more than simply speculate and that we can ground analyses on firmer evidence.

Communicative theories do not explain the sudden confluence of events around EDSA. The exercise of civic discourse and its gradual democratization process should not lead to a vitriolic upheaval in government. And, yet, simply understanding EDSA as the chance occurrence of events, like a bolt of lightning, defies credibility. Given the degree of entrenchment of the Marcos regime, surely there needed to be a sure and overweening logic to the movement in order to unseat him? The way forward seems to be to begin to understand “logic” as an unfolding praxis, both guided by a renewed sense of identity and responding to the unforeseeable playing out of events. Logic, in this sense, laid both in the partly deliberate actions of political actors and the many faceless, as well as in the underlying habitus of Metro-Manila society in 1986. It is praxis, or a theory-in-practice (Argyris and Schon, 1974).
The intellectual dialogue that is being proposed entails two directions of inquiry:

Theory \( \rightarrow \) Revolution: How do theories of social movements help us understand EDSA?

Revolution \( \rightarrow \) Theory: What does EDSA add to the theory of social movements?

As we proceed to sketch the outlines of a theory in the succeeding section, we are guided by a few simple questions:

What was special about the conditions and configuration of actors and events during those days in February, 1986, that allowed EDSA to happen (and did not occur at any other time)?

How did these elements move both people to action, on the level of both person and group?

What was the complex "logic" or "plan" that unfolded, and how did such logic congeal?

What do these elements add to the extant theories of social movements?

*Sketching a New Theory of Collective Action*

*Outlines of the Analysis*

As an intellectual project, our overall goal is to find new theoretical lenses that shine a new light upon EDSA and, in the other direction, to use this unique case study to feed into new theories of social movements. In the rest of this article, we sketch some tentative directions which we might take, raising additional questions for future theorizing to take up.

In beginning to construct a theoretical account, it does help to begin with a few basic elements that we can posit almost unequivocably. This is somewhat speculative, where we choose to begin with the (nearly) uncontroversial and test theoretical accounts that can at least include these most obvious things. Among the most evident things we observed in EDSA include the following.
• EDSA was a confluence of chance events, premeditated actions, long-term strategies, and improvisational strategies. For example, the discovery of the incipient coup was a chance event. The call to people to surround the camps at EDSA was, on the other hand, improvisational.

• A common element (perhaps the only strongly common bond), aside from the bare fact of being subjected to fascist rule for decades, was the religious dimension. Visually, the image of religious, statuaries of the Virgin, rosaries, and crucifixes dominated the scene. Strategically, the most salient voice was that of Jaime Cardinal Sin, who exhorted the people to EDSA.

• Key political actors seemed to have been engulfed by the mass of people and events. The persons who precipitated these events, Enrile and the RAM, Cory Aquino, and a few others largely receded to the wings. The coup plotters remained ensconced in their barracks, and Aquino was being kept in a convent in Cebu, an hour by plane from Manila. The voices people heard were, instead, that of Sin and June Keithley, broadcaster for Radio Veritas. Coordination of movements seemed to simply be by word of mouth and through the fugitive transmissions of Radio Veritas.

• Reversal of allegiance of the military was crucial, although it was not complete. So-called loyalist troops were poised to storm the camps at EDSA but did not. Reasons why they did not range from withdrawal of the troops in the face of, by some accounts, the miraculous, to the curious possibility that Marcos himself may have actually held them back.

• Prior to the upheaval of EDSA, the social movement was built around the “martyrdom” of Ninoy Aquino in 1983. In the days prior to EDSA, this turned to a protest around what most thought was a stolen election, symbolized by the walking out of election
commissioners in protest. Led by the wife of one of the coup plotters, the walkout nevertheless appeared to be spontaneous.

- Political elites, by some accounts, kept away from involvement. Aside from clearly disenfranchised elites (e.g., the Lopezes), most seemed to adopt a strategy of hedging their bets (i.e., avoiding open confrontation with the Marcos regime and, in some instances, courting the Marcoses openly).

- The Left was largely missing from the scene. Some of its leaders later admitted to a deliberate move to avoid aligning with the protest movement. Others would regret this as a strategic error.

- Groups present at EDSA represented the broadest spectrum of Philippine society, including religious and civic associations, schools, political action organizations, and others. However, most of those present at EDSA came as unaligned individuals.

- The dizzy turn of events challenged traditional alliances. The Reagan administration, until those few days preceding EDSA, had publicly supported the Marcos regime. On the other hand, Marcos' exit was, by many accounts, sealed by advice from American politicians (e.g., Paul Laxalt) with whom he consulted.

- The resulting government avoided all semblance of a military junta and went to great lengths to democratize society, at least on the surface. This led, on the one hand, to an emergence of a resurgent civil society. On the other hand, if surveys are to be believed, a majority of Filipinos now consider EDSA to have been a failed experiment at democratic reform. In fact, a recent (though not by any stretch unassailable) survey suggest that 42% of Filipinos do not favor the occurrence of "people power".21

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21 (http://pulseasia.newsmaker.ph/pulseasia/images/Table1_PEOPLEPOWER.gif accessed November 302, 2006)
• The Marcos era of 1972-1986 was a fascist regime, suppressing many individual and civic liberties such as free speech and habeas corpus, taking over key industries such as power, and ruling by a combination of violence and political patronage. To most accounts, it was also largely a failure in centrally-directed nation-building, succeeding in plunging the country into irretrievable debt and technological decline.

We treat the above elements as uncontroversial, which is not strictly true. In fact, there remain unresolved discrepancies in even the most faithful accounts of those days. So, to be clear, we admit that there are no uncontroversial facts to begin with. As an example, the repressiveness of the Marcos regime is, to this day, contested by a surprising number of Filipinos (and not just in Marcos’ home province in Ilocos Norte). Even the choice of claims to highlight, among the universe of least controversial claims, can itself be controversial. However, those listed above are reasonable starting points over which many would agree. Moreover, it will save us much effort in having to establish them and lets us proceed shortly to theory construction. The exercise then becomes that of testing theories for their capacity to provide reasonable generative mechanisms for the social movement while accommodating these “facts”.

The main question is as always: what is it, or what are they, that move a latent populace into action, coordinates this action, and transforms this into social change? It may appear that we have a choice of level of analysis. On the plane of the personal, the question we immediately confront is the cognitive: How and why do individuals (seemingly all of a sudden, for most people) move from passive acceptance to action? On the plane of the collective, the question becomes that of coordination: What coordinates individual action into a collective movement, and how does this effect social change? However, the choice is not present for the theory we are attempting to build, which looks at the social movement as, on the one hand, encompassing both these planes of analysis and, on the other, deliberately focusing on their planes of intersection. It is perhaps at this (perhaps artificial) juncture, where the personal begins to merge with the collective, where we are to find the most powerful insights.
Outlines of a Topological Theory of Collective Action

The insight of Mancur Olson’s theory of collective action remains: as individuals, a person’s main tendency is to not participate in collective movements (where the latter should, furthermore, be describable as public goods). The point where the theory wanes, and where our theorization needs to begin, is at the most fundamental: if persons are not simply individuals, then the theory does not hold. The problem with institutional models built around the individual, such as the market, begins with the severity of this privation. The second point, that collective movements cannot be modeled as simple public goods, is also a concern in this article.

In previous work, we described a topological theory of the person (Lejano, 2006). By topology, we mean a system of open sets. In the same manner, we understand the person to be an assemblage of associations, none of which are tightly bound. By openness, we mean that the boundaries between the individual and collective, one association from another, coalition from coalition, are all amorphous and shifting. For our purposes, we can state the proposition simply: the person is not simply the individual but the assemblage of identities, roles, and associations that make up the person. Even an individual is not simply so but, alternatively, a mother, business executive, daughter, and amateur musician. More than this, what we come to know as this person is known through the lens of her being a mother to children, a leader in the business industry, a member of a family, a parishioner in your neighborhood, and others. The person is the topology in social space where all of these associations coincide.

The difficulty with the notion of the person as an individual is that we are required to translate non-individuating elements onto the plane of the individual. For example, I perform an act because I am duty bound by family obligations. In the model of the individual, the only reason a person would do this is because she derives an individual benefit from this --which requires that we posit things like solidary benefits. But I do not do the act because it please me, or that it does anything from me as removed from any other association. I do it simply because I belong to a family, and this is what family members do. The pleasure I gain from living in coherence with the family code is beside the point. The deeply embedded “pleasure” from being part of a family (and, hence,
driving the desire to live by the family code) is a distal one far removed from the immediate circumstance — meaning, that it is not a "decision variable".

The complexity that is the person requires that motivational factors work on complex planes. Thus, it is not enough to posit that a moral code urges the person to join a collective movement. We have to explain how a social movement turns the person away from the individuating, coheres with the assemblage of associations she is embedded in, and operates on various cognitive planes (e.g., the rational, moral, aesthetic, and perhaps the subconscious). Similarly, modeling the person's joining a movement might not be best portrayed as choice, which is simply selecting an action from a menu of alternatives (i.e., to join a mob on the street or stay put). Joining may, in fact, be a manifestation of the person we have become. If there is any choice in this, it may be embedded in the myriad movements we take to become the person we are — but, again, this is a long ways removed from the action at hand. Just because we can depict an action as a choice does not mean that it is. Parallel to this is a conceptual move that takes us beyond conceiving of the collective dynamic as pluralist politics, the latter simply being an extension of the individual concept of the person. In the pluralist model, the coalition that amasses the greatest numbers and/or power, wins and, furthermore, membership involves, again, Olson's individual calculus of personal utility. The logic of these models is circular — whatever an individual does is, by definition, that which gives him the greatest utility, and whatever action wins in the public sphere is that backed by the coalition with the greatest power. Utility is, like entropy, whatever increases after the deed is done. None of this helps us understand why persons act the way they did, how movements generated support, and how they determined political outcomes.

In theorizing about social movements, we will need to explicitly examine possible mechanisms by which the individual is transformed into the social actor. Otherwise, we are hard pressed to understand why social movements work. For this reason, too, it does not serve us well to employ an associational (rather than generative) analysis such as taken by Schock (1999) which provides little insight into the specific dynamic of EDSA and some rather misleading notions. (An example of the latter is the odd claim of American support for the overthrow of Marcos, which I suspect comes from an author's drive to justify the
American model at all intellectual cost — this bias is, while formally opposite, similar in spirit to the post-colonial mode of analysis that is still popular in the Philippines long after it had exhausted itself intellectually.) The most convincing arguments come from looking for generative mechanisms.

In theorizing, it does help to employ a negative dialectic (Adorno, 1973), which begins with critiquing extant models and trying to progress from that point onwards. If we are to reject the individual model of rationality on the plane of the person, or the model of pluralism on the model of the collective, we need to point out how they fail in explaining EDSA and, furthermore, what new conceptual ground we break in so doing. The new theory should account for the truism that, for EDSA to have happened, collective action should have been enabled on many planes — beginning with the complex topologies that make up the person, to the multi-dimensional planes of association that make up the collective.

It will help to focus on two key events: the assassination of Ninoy Aquino on August 21, 1983, and the radio broadcast of Cardinal Jaime Sin on Radio Veritas on February 22, 1986.

August 21, 1983

The images of that day have been forever pressed into the pages of our collective memory — I suspect, even for those who are too young to have actually been around then. There is the affable Ninoy, boarding the plane for Manila International, glibly musing on his bullet-proof vest and how, if they shoot him in the head, then it’s all over. There is the close-up of him just about to exit the plane, the deathly realization of the unfolding event just beginning to wash over his face, being led up from his seat and onto the chute. And, lastly, there is the image of his dead body, arms thrown open, strewn face down on the runway.

The most readily available explanation of what happened within the Filipino psyche that day is simple cognitive dissonance\(^{22}\) (Festinger, 1953): the moral outrage from Aquino’s assassination drove the people to action. Upon saying this, however, we immediately realize: people were

not moved to action. True, there was moral outrage, but the effect of this should have been rapid — otherwise, outrage turns to accommodation which turns to resignation. Olson's logic might be true after all — regardless of degree of personal outrage, the individual assesses that to act toward overturning a regime is, nevertheless, a public good and, so, chooses to free-ride. And yet, on the plane of organization, many did act — forming protest groups, planning marches and boycotts, some lighting firecrackers in shopping malls, which reminds us of the narrowness of Olson's logic. Most did not act, not visibly, though it can be said that, in a substantive sense, everyone began to agitate in their own way: reading anti-Marcos literature, speaking out in public, and beginning to conceive of life after Marcos. The logic of individual rationality was challenged enough even in this period, when scores of people would go, week after week, to demonstrations even though many of them would be later picked up and detained. The personal cost of landing in jail, of being among the unlucky salvaged, far exceeded any possible solidary benefit from joining — especially since, during that time, it did not seem that Marcos was going away anytime soon. The idea that individuals reckoned everything in terms of expected utility, where they considered how small the probability was of being arrested, involved the multiplication of two unknowns — no one really knew how many were being arrested and, when they were, how much they would be punished (e.g., there being no trial, there were no sentences).

Permit me to propose that the revolution, on a cognitive level, had already risen to the plane of the personal beginning that day in 1983. Ninoy Aquino could be taken as a symbol of the every-Filipino, Juan de la Cruz — but this is not convincing to me. He was not everyman — such as Andres Bonifacio might have represented the peasant. He

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23 In a nutshell, Olson's theory of collective action (1965) describes a public good that, once provided by anyone, benefits everybody else. For example, if I pick up some litter from the ground, this makes the surroundings more pleasant not just for me but for everybody else. In this portrayal, the benefits are nonexcludable, while the cost of such action is borne by myself alone. Pushing this logic further, Olson wonders, if a person believes that others will provide the public good, which he will enjoy regardless of whether he participates or not, then it is rational for him to not act (i.e., to free-ride). The tragedy enters the picture when we realize that everyone can reason this way, resulting in no participation in the social movement. Olson, Mancur, The Logic of Collective Action (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1965).
was not symbolic of an intelligentsia, such as Jose Rizal or Apolinario Mabini were. But he did represent the middle-class (more, to the point, the personal) in a special way. Bespectacled, portly, affable, confiding, looking more like a Drew Carey than a Simon Bolivar — he was not cut of the cloth of heroism. Unlike scores of public speakers who tried to emulate Marcos’ melodramatics on the podium, nobody took Aquino as a model. We do not have images of him leading crowds to revolt, or brandishing fiery rhetoric upon a dais. To this day, when Aquino inspires art, it is almost always in the most ungainly sculpture. What he represented was the antithesis of conventional logic. Regardless of the fact that his death started a small garment industry around the yellow t-shirts with Ninoy’s face on them, the image we have of him, more than anything else, does not even show his face — but instead, only his white-garbed body face down on the pavement. In theoretic terms, this is the antithesis of Olsonian logic. And this is exactly what he represents: the beginning of a new logic that transformed each Filipino beyond the individual and onto the personal. In this light, this was not the restoration of the cognitively dissonant to the erstwhile plane of equilibria, but the injection of an entirely new logic into the self-constitution of the Filipino and their society.

It was the logic of, for the lack of a better term, kenosis. It was the death of the individual and the birth of the person. The power of this logic is easily seen if we consider the utilitarian calculus — none of these models, beginning with the prisoners’ dilemma, holds true when the logic is one of selflessness. “Not me, so much, but you, or you-and-we.” This alternative logic, even when a little of it holds, can be revolutionary. This anti-logic cannot but be comprehended at the most basic level of self-identity.

The effect of this alternative ethic on Olsonian logic is obvious. Not only does this eschew need for solitary benefits redounding to the individual, but the individual ceases to conduct the utilitarian calculus. When a person stops reckoning individual gain, the entire logic of decision theory fails. Taken to its extreme, in the prisoners’ dilemma, each prisoner assesses the returns to the other rather than to herself.

A useful (if admittedly overly simplistic) exercise might be to restate these arguments in the rationalist language in which Olson’s thesis is expressed. Let us suppose that we can understand these situations in utilitarian fashion. If we were to look at the payoff matrix from such a
two-person game, the course of play would go like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player A</th>
<th>Action 1</th>
<th>Action 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action 1</td>
<td>(2, 2)</td>
<td>(0, 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 2</td>
<td>(3, 0)</td>
<td>(1, 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above example, let Action 1 be to join the movement, and Action 2 to not join. Here, if the alternative logic holds, Player A looks not at her payoffs (the first number in each cell) but the others'. Reasoning this way, Player A judges that, whatever strategy Player B plays, B benefits the most if A plays action 1. But then Player B reasons the same way, the result being that the equilibrium for such a game is the strategy pair (Action 1, Action 1) which is the collectively most beneficial result. There then exists no need to posit such a thing as a solidary benefit. We might posit that the same results when the logic is not antithetical to self but, instead, communitarian (not the other, but the all). However, this counters the logic of the game, wherein the person does not give up her agency to the collective will but, instead, immerses herself in the fate of the other. She still acts, but for the other. She does not surrender her will or action to the collective. This is a logic that runs counter to the two diametrically opposed models: that of the individual (as institutionalized in the private), and that of the collective (as institutionalized in the state, the proletariat, the public, the communicative, etc.). Ostrom tries to resolve this by positing a middle ground, wherein she maintains the individualizing logic but within a repeated, relational game24 — however, the basic rational logic remains. In our model, the logic is antithetical.

In Ninoy, we did find a model, but one of the anti-individual. His was a symbol for the faceless, which was to be the template for a

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movement of the many faceless. It is in the rejection of self that we understand how persons can exceed Olson's logic. Face down, dressed in white as a lamb for the slaughter, arms outstretched, the victim lies as the ultimate rejection of the person as ego.

There is another vantage point from which we can understand the events of those days — and, again, it is through the perspective of the topological. One reason that the model of a public good does not serve us well, is that most important things in life are, phenomenologically, experienced as "vector payoffs".

February 22, 1986

Less than three years after the killing of Ninoy, there arose another anti-hero. Portly, ostensibly political, less than fiery in his rhetoric, Jaime Cardinal Sin was, for the longest time, accused of being too coddling of the Marcoses. In contrast to the most salient images many had of him, which was on the front page of crony newspapers showing him at some party with Imelda, EDSA constituted in some respects a transformation of the Cardinal. As if to underscore the facelessness of it all, at EDSA he came upon the scene only as a voice, pleading with people on Radio Veritas in a radio broadcast late Saturday night, February 22, 1986. Earlier that day, after the ill-attempted coup d'état had been preempted, Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos took up defensive positions at Camps Crame and Aguinaldo. Let us examine the some of the words of the Cardinal that night:

"My dear people, this is a very critical time for our country. Minister Enrile and General Ramos have expressed their position with respect to the legitimacy of the government. We appeal to our people to pray for a just and peaceful resolution of this crisis. You spoke as a people in the last election expressing a preference for peaceful change. I ask you now to be calm and to be prepared to express again your power as a people. Minister Enrile and those with him have appealed for food and expressions of support. Those of you who wish to help should do so. In the meantime continue to listen to Radio Veritas, and I will speak to you again. Let us pray together. Let us not allow a drop of blood to be shed..."
(At this point, there is a short exchange with the radio announcer.)

"I wish you to pray because it’s only through prayer that we may solve this problem. This is Cardinal Sin speaking to the people especially in Metro-Manila. I am indeed concerned about the situation of Minister Enrile and General Ramos. I am calling our people to support our two good friends at the camps. If any of you could be around at Camp Aguinaldo to show your solidarity and support at this very crucial period when our two good friends have shown their idealism, I would be very happy if you could support them now. I only wish that violence and bloodshed be avoided. Let us pray to our Blessed Lady to help us in order that we may solve this problem peacefully. Please come and let us help them by our presence. I am indeed sorry we have to disturb you during this night but this is precisely the time when we need your support for our two good friends. Thank you. God bless you. Good night"

After the radio appeal late that Saturday night, it would take scarcely till noon of the next day for EDSA to have become a scene of what has been estimated at over a million people. In the broadcast, the Cardinal made a reference to the power of the people, a phrase echoed by radio announcer June Keithley’s evocation of the “people’s power” on the fugitive broadcasts from Radio Veritas. Clearly, it was a call to collective action. But how did this appeal work? How did the people receive these words?

The plea was for two things only: presence and prayer. It was not a call for overthrow of a government, civil disobedience, or other ostensibly political action. It was, purely, a call to prevent violence. It is not evident that the Cardinal, or anyone else, had any plan in mind for how the collective action might take place, though judging from the massive outpouring of religious onto EDSA that was soon to follow, much coordination had occurred between the Cardinal and his troops during the early hours of Sunday morning. The career of events that followed

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25 It was not actually the Cardinal who first called for people to fill the streets outside the camps, but supposedly a certain Wency Reyes, in a man-on-the-street interview by Radio Veritas’ roving reporter, some hours before the Cardinal went on the air. However, it was not until the Cardinal’s radio address that people began coming to EDSA en masse. (newsstand.blogs.com/newsstand/2006/02/edsa_20_luhod_1.html accessed November 30, 2006).
was not ordained by some overweening logic, but perhaps something we can liken to coordination without design.\(^{26}\) To this author, one thing is clear — it was a call for a new institution. We may call it the institution of peace, but more directly, it was the announcement, by the country’s moral leader, of a new order, where the political question would not be settled by force. It was the realignment of the constellation of social and political elements with the express objective that “not a drop of blood shall be shed.” This is a new order of things, and, as such, was an exercise in institution-making. We intend to analyze how the polity was moved to collective action and, furthermore, how the mass action achieved order without explicit design. We need to understand how Olson’s remorseless logic was overcome. To do this, we need recourse to some theory for institution building.

Elsewhere, we constructed a model of how institution-building can be understood as relationship-construction which, in turn, is depicted in terms of identity.\(^{27}\) In this model, a relationship is modeled as the constitution of identity along three dimensions:

Constitution of Self: establishing one’s own identity or position, in a particular context.

Constitution of Self-to-Other: establishing one’s identity or position vis-à-vis another.

Constitution of Self-and-Other: establishing the identity or position of self-and-other, i.e., the union formed by the two policy actors taken as one group.

Such an operation does not only pertain to dyads, and ‘other’ can mean another individual, a group, or the rest of society. What the model signifies is that identity is worked not only in the isolation of self-knowledge, but also through the relations developed with others, which has roots in developmental psychology (Piaget, 1929). The


truism behind this notion of the person stands in contrast to utilitarian, Olsonian logic. In the latter, a person's primary and only referent is self. Decisions in the rational model are made according to individual utility. The relational model we use suggests the radical limitations of the rational model. To be is to be in relation to others. The implications of this are great. Let us take, as a limiting case, the example of the utilitarian model — even if we were to submit to the use of utility as the lingua franca of action, we see that a person now judges according to a complex vector of utilities (i.e., to self, self vis-à-vis other, and self-and-other). Could we possibly model a market that operated on these types of multi-personal utilities? Perhaps, and it may actually more closely resemble actual markets than extant models of them.\(^{28}\)

Now, we can, for sake of experimentation, return to the "toy" two-person game and see how the relational model of institution-building changes it. How do we interpret the three-part movement of the relational model in a game defined by simple payoffs? The most obvious way, it seems to me, is as in the following:

Self-Identity:                  Payoff to self

Self Vis-a-vis Other:        Relative payoff
(e.g., the other's payoff minus my own)

Self-and-Other:            Aggregate payoff

The payoff vector (2,1) then translates to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payoff to self</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative payoff</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>1-2 = -1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate payoff</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>2+1 = 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which is represented by a vector in three dimensional space: (2,-1,3). The previous payoff matrix then translates to the following:

Player B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Action 1</th>
<th>Action 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[(2,0,4),(2,0,4)]</td>
<td>[(0,3,3),(3,-3,3)]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action 1</td>
<td>[(3,-3,3),(0,3,3)]</td>
<td>[(1,0,2),(1,0,2)]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We see, then, that even in a utilitarian mode, positing an action as relationship-building radically changes the nature of the game. We could, for example, treat the above as a six-person game. Note that, if each “player” maximizes her own payoff, the above matrix game has no pure strategy solution.

The alternative logic of this particular social movement provides a ready solution, however. Consider the case when each player seeks to minimize (or, as a weaker condition, ignore) one’s own payoff, maximize the relative gain of the other player, and maximize the aggregate payoff to both players — the solution, as previously found, is for Player A to take Action 1 (Join), and Player B to do the same. The outcome is the cooperative one, where both players choose to forego self-directed interests and give one’s self over to the movement. The strategy pair (Join, Join) dominates all other strategy pairs and, so, is the predictable outcome of the game. However, as stated above, once a player tries not to be so selfless and, as a middle ground, try to maximize all three dimensions simultaneously, a pure strategy solution would not exist, though it is certainly to be expected that, given sufficient smoothness and convexity conditions, a mixed strategy equilibrium could be proven to exist (though not necessarily be unique).

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Note that the logical next step is to attempt to prove the existence of equilibria in mixed strategies. Given certain requirements on smoothness and continuity, we should be able to show that certain solutions to this problem would exist. This is a topic for future work and, at this point, we merely suggest that this has the potential for radically altering the outcomes of bargaining situations, including market games. Mathematical treatments of the multi-dimensional game will appear in future work as part of an evolving project in alternative economic models.
Deeper understanding is possible when we leave the simplistic payoff model above and describe, in richer terms, how each dimension might be understood by the player. The experience and utterly otherness of this logic is rich beyond description, at least in this piece. For this reason, we should point the reader to the numerous interviews of people at the scene.

What moves the person to exceed the individual mode of reasoning? Here, we see the crucial role in this of, first, Aquino’s death and, later on, the Cardinal’s radio broadcast. They were instruments that brought a transcendent element to people’s everyday reality. This element of transcendence, then, is the crucial element (at least, in the EDSA story) that allows people to move beyond the individualistic and gather into a social movement. The assassination of Aquino was that which triggered the person to go beyond the limiting boundaries of self. Parallel to our multi-dimensional model for the relational world, the Cardinal’s plea was then the impetus to carry the person further, onto not just leaving self but giving of self onto relations with others. While Aquino’s death signified kenosis, the death to the limiting self, the Cardinal’s words signified the end of this kenosis, which is not just self-denial, but the giving over of one’s self to the other. We should be reminded that the Cardinal did not call people to revolt against Marcos but, specifically, to shield the rebel soldiers from harm. What people were shouting at EDSA was not “laban” (“fight”) but “luhod” (“kneel”). The call was that of surrendering self onto otherness. “Throw yourselves, and your very bodies, into the streets, to protect and care for your neighbor,” was essentially what the Cardinal was saying. It was not simply the losing of one’s self into the puddle of a collective — in this kenosis, self is given over to a specific other, signified by the word “neighbor”. The agency of the person is preserved in this movement, instead of its mere dissolution into a collective cause.

The call can then be understood as a three-part logic. First, there was the rejection of violence which, in this case, was an overturning of the hegemonic logic that subsumed the individual to the state — that is, “not a drop of blood shall be shed.” Conceptually, this is an affirmation of the person as the prime focus and engine of the political. The second part of the message is the call for transcendence of individualism, specifically to act for the other — in this case, the “two friends” trapped in their barracks. It is not an institution who protects the other, neither
the church nor civil society, but only the person who can do it. Neither is it the individual who does this, but the person for whom identity is constituted in a web of relations (i.e., in constituting "friends"). The last part of the message was an evocation of the collective (the "solidarity"), in which is realized a force for institutional change ("the power of the people"). The actual words are not important. What matters the most is that the Cardinal was invoking an ethical framework that lay deep in the Filipino identity.

EDSA was a confluence of, on the one hand, a relational schema that was deeply embedded in the people's Christian experience and, on the other, the strategic requirements of mass action. There is no way to disentangle the ethical from the analysis, as the Christian ethic was the source of the implicit coordinative principle that gave order without design. I am by no means the first to point out the inescapably Christian framework that defined EDSA (e.g., Constantino interprets the event as a moment of collective kenosis and the social manifestation of the mystical Church30). The logic of nonviolence did not suffice — more decisively, it required the logic of kenosis. The particular relational field constituted by this ethic did enable the transcendence of individualism — it is perhaps no accident that the most effective conceptual device we can find for modeling the relational field, that relationship can be constituted as identity along three dimensions, hearkens to the Trinitarian model of Being. In this thought, I am drawing from Panikkar (1973) who expounds on a philosophy of the Trinity, and the intimate action of kenosis within the Trinity. As Panikkar writes, "...the Trinity is not only the theoretical foundation-stone of Christianity but also the practical, concrete and existential basis of Christian life." I am sure I would not be the first to point out how the ethic of EDSA was perhaps, most foundationally, a Trinitarian one.31

It is clear how radically constritive Olson's framework is, and we need to think beyond it at some point. In EDSA, people just did not reason that way. First, it cannot be utilitarian because the logic is not

30 Constantino, (Sister) Joseph Patrick, *Cry Beloved Church, Rejoice!*, originally published under the name Susana Jose (Quezon City: Carmelite Monastery, 1986/2004).

consequentialist. I am reminded of the account of one couple who, upon seeing a group of nuns hit the ground in front of a tank, found themselves doing the same. They would later reflect how no other considerations, not even for what might happen to their children should the tank run over them, entered their minds. When one finds herself staring into the tire treads of a tank, I also imagine that solitary benefits are not on the forefront of her consciousness — the logic just is be governed by personal utility. There is another reason to exceed a strictly utilitarian model, and this is because of the change in the universe of alternatives that the logic of kenosis introduces — this, in turn, makes rational expectations impossible. Consider the fairly narrow range of options for action that result under a utility maximizing ethic. In the case of the collective action problem, the ethic reduces possible actions to a single one: not to join (or whatever that action is that results from optimization). However, when the other-directed logic is employed, this instead expands the range of possible actions. First of all, serving another expands to uncountable proportions simply because one then has countless “others” to choose from: the person standing beside you, the group of people standing around both of you, the mass of people at that intersection, the two people trapped in the barracks, the rebel soldiers, etc. The nature of the action also expands in range. Now, there is the option of self-martyrdom, simply supporting indirectly, supporting those around you, bringing food, and simply standing in support.

There was, in this movement, what Arendt calls the particularity of compassion. Compassion, as opposed to pity, being what distinguished the French from the American revolutionary figures, involves empathy for specific others rather than invoking a generalized other (the masses, the lumpenproletariat). But does this characteristic of compassion keep it, perhaps, from translation into the level of institution and of practice?

There is something to be said, here, about the intimate connection between ritual behavior and collective action. Indeed, Durkheim might explain the social movement of EDSA as evolving out of the mass ritual of religious observance — kneeling on a pew and kneeling in front of

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32 Ibid.
a tank. It is in these ritual actions that people transcend the individual and engage in a collective. As Rappaport writes, the social contract and morality that inheres in ritual is such that one might understand "ritual to be humanity's basic social act". Therefore, we can interpret EDSA, the collective movement, as being generated by the ritual life of the society's religion: the action of "lukod", the sharing of bread, in some cases, the celebration of Mass on the street.

What remains for future work is to obtain some evidence that persons really did think, feel, and reason this way. A powerful exercise would be to speak with people who were there that day and try to understand what motivated them, and how they understood the situation at that moment. One is reminded of the pictures we saw, in the days following, of nuns (sometimes alone, at times in groups) standing in the most resolute yet vulnerable way in front of the tank. What did they understand themselves to be doing when they did so? Why did they risk self? What did the broadcast on Radio Veritas mean to them? Did their personal experience resonate with the memorable words of the Cardinal, spoken as if from on high?

**Denouement**

We need to reconcile our theorization with the present-day sentiment that EDSA was a failed social experiment. Most often, "EDSA's failure" is brought up in the same breath as people point to the moribund economy and decaying infrastructure, which is curious, since the EDSA "revolution" was mainly about freeing the people from tyranny, not about goods and services. As Arendt might say about the French revolution, liberation from oppression was child’s play when compared to the task of freedom from necessity. Therefore, Martin Luther King would say much the same thing about the civil rights movement in the United States of the 1960's. The fact is, the ethic of the movement

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was not simply to mobilize against a tyrant, but to heal the broken institutions of the Marcos regime. The failure lay in, upon removing Marcos, first in the discovery that the country could not simply recover the political virtues (and civic exuberance) that existed pre-Marcos, and in the subsequent realization that there was no real vision for the nation post-Marcos — the vision was simply, minimally that we would someday be rid of that tyrant.

EDSA was an adequate model for bringing down a dictator but not rebuilding the nation, they say. Or, what is saying the same thing, EDSA was simply about replacing the personalities but the system remained the same. If any of these notions are credible, why and how does the model fail? If an ethic of selflessness was sufficient to propel bodies in front of tanks, why could it not be used to harness a collective movement for institutional reform? Then there is always the other argument that it really was not the nuns that stopped the tanks — perhaps it was just the threat of other, more numerous tanks. Was EDSA really an achievement of nonviolent change, or just an occasional bubbling over from the same cauldron of power? Or was the failure in the underlying ethic of EDSA, that, once righting one institutional wrong (the mangling of republicanism), all the others would follow. There is an irony to this, in that perhaps the deeper ailment was that, regardless of the great extent to which Marcos’ was a failed presidency, had he not resorted to wholesale cheating, it is within the realm of possibility he might actually have won that election.

The biggest issue remains how the ills of the Marcoses have outlasted them. While Cory Aquino was widely acknowledged to have been honest, it is widely thought that people associated with her administration in almost no time took over the corrupt practices abandoned by the Marcos party. Of the parallels between Joseph Estrada and Marcos, maybe the most telling of all is the manner that their administrations ran on whim rather than informed judgment. Quezon City, the site of the EDSA revolution, is itself a case study in quagmire. The post-EDSA period was to prove, for that city, the beginning of a series of embarrassing mayoral regimes, one disreputable administration after another eventually transforming the city into what it is today: a jumble of uncoordinated land uses, the most consistent of which are row upon row of beer joints and what one suspects are sanctioned bordellos, where every inch of space is taken up by political sloganeering (e.g.,
not a sidewalk gets paved without bearing the initials of the mayor), and the most typifying characteristic of which is uncollected garbage. The heroes of EDSA, who took over the reins of government, are now accused of much the same excesses of the Marcos regime. Many of these same public figures at EDSA would, years later, be seen to betray the nation by supporting another to be deposed president, Joseph Estrada. The Cardinal is dead. The sources of disenchantment are many.

We cannot resolve this question at the moment — this article is merely a proposal for research. Perhaps it is simply the much greater complexity, in terms of strategy, and scale of investment, in terms of effort, of nation-building. Maybe a sense of crisis is needed for transformation. Maybe the one common ground for a collective identity is the experience of oppression. But the relational model, which we used to explain the phenomenon of 1986, remains. We find the theory unable to explain its failure, or the inability to translate the ethic into more lasting, structural reforms. We maintain: the reconfiguration of the relational field is a structural change. Its inadequacy to the task may be in the simplistic way we mapped out the relational field. It may be in the dynamic nature of this same field, in which configurations may oscillate from one pole to another.

Was the greatest deficiency in the movement that the action of liberation ended with the departure of Marcos and swearing in of Aquino? Should EDSA’s revolutionaries have instead, as did Robespierre, been more reluctant to end the career of the revolution? To be sure, the action of reform did play out in many ways after February 25th, 1986. The almost automatic corollary of revolution, constitution-writing, would take place soon afterward and would not be without significant elements of change (in language, where we now find the word “love” in its preamble, and in institutional form, where perhaps the most significant effect of the constitution was the establishment of political space for “civil society”). And yet, perhaps the needs of the society lay even deeper than liberation from tyranny (e.g., the exile of Marcos, closure of American bases, constitutional provisions against authoritarian rule) and hope for these deeper aspirations ending with the swift events of those days in February. Unlike the American revolution, the building of the nation was not enshrined in the new constitution which raises the question, if the spirit of the movement is not to be found in the constitution, where do we find it? What is the
foundation of the new nation? As a research proposal, this suggests the
great need to study the process of institution-building that ensued from
February 25 onwards. Can we trace succeeding events to the emergent
consciousness that was given life in those days at EDSA? Can we find
cause for the emergence of an Estrada (much as the French revolution
would give rise to Napoleon) in the motivations and deficiencies of
EDSA? The truth is, upon the first light of dawn that February 26th, the
new leaders found themselves thrust upon the task of nation-building,
needing to build upon the movement of the revolution to found a
new nation and, in this sense, the movement did live beyond Marcos’
departure.

Was it possibly its supposed origins among the middle class, rather
than elites or the poor, which gave the revolution a seemingly superficial,
short-lived nature? Or are we simply ignoring lasting changes that
resulted? It is also possible that we might later on find that EDSA did
cause a reconfiguration of the relational field, perhaps one that moved
from the centralized structure of control to a diffused yet equally
corrupt micro-structuration — certainly, people think this. But this
popular notion needs to be explicitly theorized — how did this occur,
and what makes this change so pervasive, pejorative, and sustained?
Perhaps the problem with EDSA was that it was precisely a movement
without a theory. Or perhaps the logic of the movement runs deeper,
in ways that do not touch the everyday practice of governance. If it was
a Christian movement, then why could it not encompass the healing
of broken institutions, in a sense building institutions upon the Geist
of the movement, or is its ethic literally transcendent? Why should the
call to action not include a call to reform, and why should its morality
not be a social one? Or was the fault in the fact that, rather than think
and act according to the integral persons evinced at EDSA, the public
sphere once more regressed back to the domain of individuals? These
are the questions that our theorizing needs to resolve.

While unable to answer these in any adequate way, let me propose
some conceptual directions. First, there is the fact that EDSA was
essentially a movement without an ideology — more than ideology is
the lack of a coherent vision for nation-building. As it is, EDSA today
symbolizes the death of the centrist state and the enshrinement of local
governance in the ensuing constitution furthers this. The weakness of
the state poses problems, however. The point is that the movement was
founded on a negative concept — liberté as simply the rejection of and fleeing from. What exists today as a nationalist ethic is founded on a negative concept — fleeing from the U.S., the global hegemon. In this milieu, where is the vision of the nation to be found? Perhaps nowhere, and to understand this, we might begin where it begins, which is the ritual basis of social and political life.

As discussed earlier, the ethic of otherness is something that doubtless lies deep in the cultural code and ritualized in various ways, most of all in religious practice. So being, this ethic should not be a transient one — i.e., good enough to oust Marcos but not to rebuild the shattered nation. I propose that it is in the realization of what other is, is where it breaks down. The other, one’s neighbor, etc. takes on immediately local forms in Philippine society. For a short while, it was the people in the barracks — but more so, the more immediate other shoulder-to-shoulder with one’s self on the street. Over a more institutional duration, other simply extends to family — here, we understand distance to be some measure of proximity in the relational field (i.e., the personal, not the formal). Perhaps there is too much compassion (i.e., pathos for the particular other) and not enough pity (i.e., pathos for the generalized other). In the religious sphere, it extends to the Church and to God. But missing from this is the middle ground of neighborhood, city, nation. Drawing from Durkheim37, we might trace some of this to the founding rituals of society — e.g., religious practice is either confined to the private and familial, or, on the other end, the transcendental, universal Church. But what of the Pasyon, the Santacruzan, feast days and processions — surely these re-enact the community? But that may be part of the point — these very institutions are waning — e.g., there are few in San Juan today who would remember how to play the parts in the ritual feast day procession, which would end with San Juan Bautista jumping off the bridge into San Juan River (now a cesspool).

Let me tentatively propose that, perhaps, the rationalization of society has gone in a different direction from Weber’s — that is, instead of a consequentialist technical rationality, one finds a relational rationality of the immediate — what’s here, what’s next. Religious practice, on the other hand, seems to look in the other extreme — God and

Church as universal. I propose that it springs from the same source: the understanding of God as transcendent but an incomplete understanding of God as immanent. This is realized in the abstract but more so in the concrete performance of everyday life. If God is understood purely as the universal engineer laying down the plan and enacting it, then all we need to be concerned about is reaction, the improvised maneuvering through the everyday. There is no transcendent moment in society, not even the EDSA revolution. Perhaps, in the end, the best analogy for Philippine society is that used by Geertz to describe the political economy of rice paddies — i.e., ever-imploding involution,\textsuperscript{38} which is why the Filipino polity may be so given over to the personal dimension and so confounding to the formal.

\textsuperscript{38} Geertz, Clifford, \textit{Agricultural Involution} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).