CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT CENTER (CTMC)
CONSTRUCTIVE STRUGGLE MODEL

> "*The powerful ideas that you brought were with us the whole way.*"
> -*Fifth Mother* Representative speaking about the Jewish-Arab blood donation campaign they designed with CTMC's guidance

Since its inception, SHATIL's CTMC has provided constructive struggle consulting to **Combatants for Peace, Fifth Mother, B'nei Avraham, Machsom Watch, Bereaved Parents Circle, Encounter, Sikkuy, Israel Reform Movement, Friends of the Earth Middle East, Bat Shalom,** SHATIL's **Mixed Cities and Triangle Offices** and **Jerusalem Open House,** among others.

One of the primary models used by the CTMC is the *Constructive Struggle* model which urges a heterogeneous understanding of "the enemy" rather than demonization and demands the use of only nonviolent methods. CTMC successfully utilized the model during the August 2005 Gaza Disengagement by partnering with experts in the field to initiate training sessions with influential personalities in the settler movement and with senior IDF commanders. The initiative bore fruit as the operation itself occurred without violence.

Contained in this Overview of the constructive struggle are the following pieces:

ITEM #1:

Strategic Thinking and Non-Violence in Israel's Disengagement from Gaza
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Despite all the difficulties, powerful emotions and its enormous complexity, the disengagement process turned out to be far less violent than was feared. Just what was it that enabled the security forces to act with "sensitivity and steadfastness" and prevent the situation from escalating? And what guided leaders on the Right – in their no less determined struggle. What were the strategic principles which lay behind the actions of both sides and facilitated the prevention of violence in so loaded and sensitive a process? During May-June 2005, Shatil-The New Israel Fund's Empowerment and Training Center, initiated the development of a program to prevent escalation and violence in the disengagement process. The program would be based

on the application of principles of constructive, non-violent struggle in an emerging conflict situation. Shatil approached psychologists, Professor Haim Omer and Nachi Alon, authors of *The Devil Among Us – From Demonization to Dialogue (in press),* to collaborate in developing principles and guidelines for both sides in the disengagement struggle. Shatil then contacted key figures in the army, police and religious leaders, putting them in contact with the two experts.

In a series of over 20 meetings, Professor Omer met with more than 200 high-ranking officers, and psychologists in the security forces, conveying to them the principles and methods involved in constructive, non-violent struggle. In parallel, Nachi Alon met with leaders, rabbis and main activists among the disengagement's opponents. In the wake of these meetings, principles of constructive struggle were thus integrated into the broader realm of mental preparedness which each party was pursuing, and a whole new dimension/layer was added to existing models/concepts *of struggle.*

A congress organized by the New Israel Fund, Shatil and the Swiss Embassy in Israel, drew the attention of political leaders and the media to these same principles. Shatil accompanied and documented this innovative, extraordinary process throughout. For the first time, the principles of constructive, non-violent struggle have been embedded within the framework of a historical process, changing the reality in Israel.

The article aims (i) to describe how the theory of constructive, non-violent struggle helped prevent escalation and violence during the disengagement, and (ii) to enable a better understanding both of this unique theory of struggle and of key events in the disengagement process.

Humanization and Demonization – The basic perception of the 'other' which is activated almost automatically in conflict situations is one of asymmetry: "we're right – they're wrong"; "we're rational, they've totally lost it"; in short – We're good – they're bad". In general, a one-dimensional, very homogeneous perception of the 'other' develops, "They're all the same". The image of "all" on the other side largely represents an extremist, violent, dangerous, frightening stereotype, who threatens our very existence.

In the disengagement process it would have been easy enough for each side to create a homogeneous, demonic picture of the other. Those who opposed the disengagement and did not leave till the target date, could have been depicted as a bunch of extremist religious fanatics, or even 'crazies' – the fact that they didn't leave voluntarily being used as evidence of their extremism. In parallel, it would have been possible (for opponents of the disengagement) to relate to soldiers who chose not to refuse orders as "traitors", obeying orders that were neither "Jewish" nor even "humane".

Both sides consciously chose to refrain from these kinds of descriptions and to emphasize instead the differences and the humanity within the other's camp and what the members of both camps had in common. Particularly evident was the readiness of both sides to show their feelings of pain and hardship, a rare thing in conflict situations where the usual basic tendency is to "look strong", and not reveal to one's rival any emotion which could be interpreted as weakness. Humanization in the disengagement process prevented demonization, and worked to moderate violence even in the most difficult situations.

Psychological Warfare, Talking, Dialogue
In the course of the disengagement, verbal exchanges between evacuators and those being evacuated, were described on a continuum from "psychological warfare" to "dialogue". In conflict situations, encounters in the field do not allow for dialogue, partly because of the pressure and the forceful emotions involved. On the whole, verbal exchanges during a conflict

lead to escalation, rather than to understanding and/or calming the situation down. Attempts at persuasion tend to provoke and inflame passions, exposing gaps and differences between the sides. Disagreement easily develops into argument, then to verbal, and finally, even physical confrontation.

During the disengagement, soldiers and police frequently faced extremely harsh comments and expressions, but did not utter a word in response. This degree of self-restraint was by no means easy, but became a value – endowed with the specific purpose of preventing escalation.

When there was verbal communication, what stood out, was the use by soldiers and police of statements prepared in advance such as, "I don't have any choice" or I'm just a part of the operational wing". Statements of this sort are not part of a dialogue process, because they transmit a one-sided message. They do not constitute an attempt to persuade, because they are self-directed rather than toward the 'other'. This "unilateral communication" does not respond to claims made by the other side, or argue with the latter's outlook on life but makes such discussion itself irrelevant ("I don't have decision-making authority so there's no point arguing with me"), and, simultaneously, reinforces the famous "steadfastness" ("I have no choice but to carry out the duty that is asked of me"). In the field, when feelings were running high, this kind of communication was very helpful in preventing escalation and violence.

The opponents of disengagement also used this kind of unilateral communication successfully. Months before, signs hung in the streets, displaying the words: "Sir, I simply can't". Here, too, was a one-sided message, the force of which did not lie in persuasion but in the same straightforward, determined demonstration of, "there's no choice". The effectiveness of this kind of message stands out especially in comparison to the later message which replaced it, "Brother – you cannot". Although both messages were identical in content, the newer one was directed not at the 'self' but at the 'other' and was thus more provocative and less effective, more inflammatory and less determined.

Assuming responsibility unilaterally is a basic principle in the process of constructive struggle, enabling each side to change the dynamics of the struggle without waiting for the other. In conflict situations, both sides aim for symmetry, letting any progress or change on one side be dependent on a display of willingness or commitment to a solution from the other. But this waiting game can go on forever. Unilateral change, especially when the stronger side in the conflict initiates it, can significantly moderate the escalation spiral and even prevent it altogether.

Behind the Scenes
Dialogue and negotiation behind the scenes were revealed as not only possible, but extremely effective. This was due (i) to the enormous capability for force at each party' disposal and (ii) to the choice both parties made to focus the discussion on how the action would be pursued and not on its legitimacy. The possibility of organized and massively powerful military warfare on the one hand and disciplined guerilla warfare on the other, hovered continuously over the negotiating table. The leadership on both sides consciously chose to restrain the use of force, but its very real existence on both sides provided the motivation for holding negotiations and the backing for agreements reached.

Similarly, the choice to focus negotiation on "how" and not on "what" or "if," proved critical for its success. Here, too, any attempt at persuasion would have been a lost cause, because of the complexity of ideology, politics and faith involved. But despite the zero chance of persuasion, dialogue played an important role. **Negotiations conducted in the realm of "how", facilitated, for example, agreement on where "red lines" were to be drawn, how**

communication channels would be open during moments of crisis, as well the making of special arrangements for prayer times and "separation" ceremonies.

The involvement of parties acceptable to both sides also played an important role. For example, delegations of Rabbis who made their way from settlement to settlement, helped to calm feelings down in crisis situations, and in reaching agreements and making arrangements some of which were both moving and quite extraordinary. They also assisted by increasing transparency and in passing on critical items of information. For example, rabbis present at a briefing for the evacuating forces, explained that a person being evacuated might draw out a knife in order to perform a ritual tear in his/her clothing – a sign of mourning. Without this piece of information, the same knife might have acted as a catalyst to a violent clash.

Responses to Provocation
One of the main tests of non-violent struggle is the ability to cope with verbal or physical provocation from the other side. In the disengagement, each side was trained in how to respond to provocation and violence by the other. In the course of preparation, self-restraint was promoted as a value, as a source of "team pride," in a variety of ways. For example, a story was spreading amongst the disengagement opponents according to which a leader from the Judea and Samaria Council had been beaten during the demonstration at *Kfar Maimon*, but had chosen to conceal his injuries. Whether or not the story was true, it became a myth – and the implicit moral was clear: Restraint is a value and a source of pride.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between non-violent struggle and submission: in contrast to destructive struggle, **the response in constructive struggle to violence is not counter-violence**. However this asymmetrical situation is totally different to "giving in" or submitting. The struggle continues, but in ways that aim to reduce violence. The response of the security forces to the pouring of acid by their opponents who had barricaded themselves on a rooftop, is a good illustration of this basic difference. **The security forces did not respond by using more and greater force against the barricaded opponents, although it was well within their capability to do so. Instead, the response, was to crane-lift the soldiers and police onto the roof.**

This procedure demonstrates how one can oppose violence and circumvent it, without ending or intensifying the struggle. An asymmetrical response of this kind breaks the vicious spiral of escalation. It should be noted that the willingness of the stronger party to use non-violent strategy is especially effective: even if the other side displays violence, it is in the power of the determination and asymmetrical response of the stronger side to restrain it.

Dealing with Extremists
One issue that the security forces mulled over was in which direction to operate – from 'light' to 'heavy' or 'heavy' to 'light'? To act decisively with the "hard-core" right at the start of the operation or deal with them at the end? The answer is absolutely clear in terms of "military logic". First, suppress the extremists, "take the fortifications", and then easily deal with the others, without any threats. But during the disengagement, this kind of action could easily have provoked an escalation dynamic. A violent struggle with a few extremists could have spread like wildfire sweeping along the more moderate in the "war for our home".

Behind "normal" military logic lies a perception of destructive conflict – or war: a desire to achieve as swift a victory as possible, with preparedness for casualties in the opponent's and one's own camp, and the destruction of anything "good" in the existing relationship. In practice, the basic approach employed by both sides was totally and essentially different: **The victory ambition was replaced by the call for steadfastness, with a consciously, directed attempt to minimize injuries on both sides and preserve everything positive between**

them. Accordingly, in the final analysis, the opposite decision (to military logic) was made by the security forces – and they progressed from light to heavy. First the moderate settlements were evacuated, and in each settlement the more moderate opponents were evacuated first. This strategic decision required both resources and patience but was of utmost significance in reducing violence and escalation. By the time there were clashes with extremists, the moderates were no longer on the scene. This decision was also significant in terms of increasing the soldiers' motivation: accumulating "successes" in evacuating the first settlements, created the sense that this mission was indeed possible, and thus increasing willingness to persevere.

The Role of the Media in Preventing Escalation

The media adore any kind of drama, sensation or emotion that helps push up the ratings. In the disengagement process, the desire and ability of the media to document potentially explosive events contributed, however, to reducing escalation. **A basic principle in constructive struggle is that openness serves the non-violent side**. A violent clash, broadcast by the media, usually causes the public to sympathize with the non-violent side. In the disengagement, both sides declared their desire to adhere to non-violence, and both wanted to win the sympathy of the TV-viewing public. As a result, the presence of the camera contributed not only to documenting the reality, but to shaping it; the knowledge that there was a camera on every corner, ready to cover the slightest manifestation of violence, helped in restraining and preventing such instances. Even the most difficult, complex moments, such as the evacuation of the synagogue were publicly broadcast. The decision to enable media coverage in such situations helped to deal with them in non-violent ways.

The Day After

In destructive conflicts, the "day after" does not play a particularly important role. Such conflicts are characterized by a perception of time as "narrow", focusing on the battle and not on the war itself. Thus, the result of a specific event, such as the disengagement, is a whole world in itself, in which success or loss is perceived as an all-or-nothing situation. In the disengagement, however, talk of the "day after" played an important role in reducing escalation, (i) because of the understanding, that after the disengagement, we have to live here together, and (ii) because of the acknowledgement that the struggle does not end here. An example of this approach was when the security forces, using megaphones, turned to their opponents, calling, "We have to evacuate you, but we know we are not breaking your spirit."

In the short-term, the knowledge that the ideological struggle over world-outlook and way-of-life had not come to an end, enabled the evacuees to walk out upright, with their heads held high. It also moderated manifestations of violence and extremism.

In the long-term, the "orange" struggle will continue into the approaching Knesset election period and will probably gather strength because it is a struggle over an ideology and world-outlook. And, in the long-term, the orange ribbon is likely to be far more effective than the use of violence. **The spreading of spikes and oil on roads, for example, demonstrated how violent struggle can sabotage long-term objectives – it may have brought exposure but it certainly didn't bring support**. The continuation of such tactics would have led to the labeling of disengagement opponents as "crazy" or "public enemies". The decision to put a stop to the blocking of roads has served long-term aims. Even though road-blocking was not an act of violence and achieved widespread media coverage, it caused a great deal of frustration among drivers, if not anger and hatred. Ending this tactic advanced the overall objective of maximizing broad public support.

ITEM #2A:

JERUSALEM OPEN HOUSE
The *Jerusalem Open House* (JOH) is a community center for Jerusalem's gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders, advancing the cause of justice and pluralism for the LGBTQ community in Israel. In recent years, JOH organizes an annual WorldPride March in Jerusalem featuring activists and supporters of the community. Its presence in Jerusalem is tactical in its symbolism—gay rights in Jerusalem are constantly ignored and even denied in a city whose ultra-Orthodox population is growing faster than any other and whose stronger, secular population is moving out in droves.

In JOH's WorldPride March 2005, an ultra-Orthodox Jew stabbed three marchers in violent protest causing one marcher serious injury while the other two sustained. In the run-up to the 2006 march, JOH approached SHATIL for assistance in designing a march that preserved their ideals but also preserved a non-violent character. CTMC staffer and social psychologist, Nachi Alon trained members of JOH in the principles of the *constructive struggle model* for de-escalating violence.

In addition, CTMC provided intensive assistance in building an advocacy campaign which included media coverage, public support and lawsuits. Ultimately the JOH and a broad-based coalition made the tactical decision of hosting a rally (instead of a parade) attended by some 3,000 supporters and covered widely in the national and international media—despite threats of violence from Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox community.

"The consultations with SHATIL's CTMC were extremely helpful," said JOH chair, Ayelet Schnur. "We decided to distribute flyers to each March participant emphasizing the importance of the event being conflict and violence-free and of reducing friction with bystanders. We also decided to train 100 volunteer peacekeepers to monitor the march. We are now evaluating all our activities to see if they are in accordance with the principles of *constructive struggle*."

ITEM #2B:

THE FIFTH MOTHER
SHATIL's consulting with *The Fifth Mother* during 2007 was provided by our Conflict Transformation and Management Center (CTMC.) The central model that the CTMC employed during its consulting is called the *Constructive Struggle*. The *Constructive Struggle Model* was developed by Tel Aviv University psychologists Professor Haim Omer and Nahi Alon for de-escalating family conflicts and was then adapted together with SHATIL for use on the societal level. It proposes understanding the heterogeneity of the enemy rather than demonizing him and utilizing only nonviolent methods in designing civil society struggles. CTMC successfully utilized the model during the August 2005 Gaza Disengagement by partnering with experts in the field to initiate training sessions with influential personalities in the settler movement and with senior IDF commanders. The initiative bore fruit as the operation itself occurred virtually violence-free.

In this vein, SHATIL assisted *The Fifth Mother* in building a *constructive struggle*—facilitating brainstorming and training key members in the practical tools of the model. With SHATIL guidance, *The Fifth Mother* designed and executed a project bringing together Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel to donate blood for Palestinian victims of violence in Gaza. The project garnered media attention with the targeted consulting of a senior SHATIL advocacy and media consultant and aided in the further strengthening of this fledgling NGO.

ITEM #2C:

MACHSOM WATCH
In 2007, SHATIL continued a long-standing consulting relationship with *Machsom Watch*. Members of *Machsom Watch* approached Shatil for assistance in bringing their grassroots message to national policy makers and media sources. To that end, together with SHATIL, *Machsom Watch* built a national network of committees charged with coordinating advocacy, communications, resource development and publications. In addition to greatly bolstering their national presence, SHATIL's organizational development consulting facilitated the formation of a country-wide Secretariat to coordinate committee efforts. SHATIL will continue working with *Machsom Watch* in 2008 using a two-fold approach. Firstly, SHATIL will help the newly-formed Secretariat in developing organizationally-sound management mechanisms as well as build a retreat on building a strategy and vision for a nonviolent, *constructive struggle*-based, anti-occupation movement in Israel. The designing of the retreat and its facilitation will be with Nachi Alon, one of the initiator of the *constructive struggle* model.