But it is one thing to work through a case study and consider all the possibilities. It is quite another to be thrown into a turbulent and fast-moving situation such as the one in the video clip.

**Lessons learnt**

As discussed in Section 2.2 and Box 2.1 of the textbook, the UNPROFOR operated under a UN Chapter 6 mandate and hence their power to take action was very limited. The UK Government learnt from the experiences of the units that served with UNPROFOR and pushed for a stronger mandate so that the forces on the ground would no longer be put in the position Lieutenant Feeley found himself that day. Later, a Chapter 7 mandate was authorised and the IFOR troops (NATO – not UN) who replaced UNPROFOR in 1995 were able to take much stronger action and to enforce the peace; it was no longer self-defence only. The British army no longer deploys troops with Rules of Engagement as restrictive as those under which Feeley had to operate. But even under Chapter 7 rules of engagement, the questions remain and the wisdom of Feeley’s decisions would still need consideration and debate.

**10.5 Interpersonal confrontation and negotiation**

Resolving tensions within an organisation requires similar negotiating skills to those needed to develop collaboration between organisations, so we look at these issues together. But we start with tensions within an organisation, which can vary in strength and origin. In particular they can be:
- longstanding or of short duration;
- intense and damaging or minor and easily managed;
- and between local and national perspectives, between head office and field or between national and foreign.

It is all too easy to sit in one’s logic bubble and dismiss other points of view, and disputes within organisations are put down to people being difficult, to personality clashes or even to troublesome employees. Yet research has shown that the attitudes of difficult people account for a very small percentage of internal disputes.

Some senior staff have a tendency to blame problems on the personal shortcomings of their staff, citing, for example, laziness, lack of motivation or poor skills. This is their logic bubble when it comes to understanding poor performance and the causes of interpersonal disputes. But the people who work for them see things quite differently. Many of their difficulties they attribute to environmental problems. This is an example of differing perceptions.

Whetten and Cameron (1993) cite three organisational problems which cause what are seen as interpersonal conflicts:

1. Flaws in the information and communication systems. A significant message may not be received; a memo may be misinterpreted. Once the
facts are clarified the problem tends to be resolved, so it is always worth checking at source if a communication has not arrived or if one has stirred things up.

2 Incompatible roles. Many organisations are so complex that disagreement and dispute can arise between people whose tasks are interdependent but whose roles are incompatible. For example, disagreement may arise in an agency between those who are fundraisers and those who are field workers. Fundraisers may push for pictures of starving children being helped by aid workers, because that is seen to generate donations, while fieldworkers resist this as demeaning and counterproductive, creating an image of helplessness.

3 Stressful working environments. When the environment is fluctuating and uncertain, people can become anxious and over-sensitive. The regular restructurings within aid organisations and NGOs are a major source of stress that can affect personal working relationships. If an organisation is experiencing financial difficulties and going through a period of cost-cutting then people are bound to be edgy and uncomfortable.

Whetten and Cameron (1993) describe how people’s responses to interpersonal confrontations have a tendency to fall into five different categories.

Table 10.1 Five approaches to negotiating and handling personal disputes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Supporting rationale</th>
<th>Likely outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forcing</td>
<td>To get your own way</td>
<td>It is better to risk a few hard feelings than to give up on an issue you are committed to</td>
<td>You may feel vindicated, but others may feel defeated, even humiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>To avoid having to deal with the issue</td>
<td>Disagreements are inherently bad as they lead to tension</td>
<td>Interpersonal problems are not resolved which can lead to long-term frustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>To reach an agreement quickly</td>
<td>Long drawn out disputes distract people from their jobs and can lead to bitterness</td>
<td>Over time people may seek expedient, rather than effective, solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Not to upset the other person</td>
<td>Maintenance of harmonious relationships should be a top priority</td>
<td>People may well take advantage of you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>To resolve the issue together</td>
<td>The positions of all parties are equally important and equal emphasis should be placed on the quality of the outcome and the fairness of the decision-making process</td>
<td>The issue is most likely to be resolved. Also, all parties are likely to be committed to the solution and are satisfied that they have been treated fairly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Whetten and Cameron (1993; p. 33).
Think about some interpersonal issues you may have been involved in. Do you recognise any of the different responses described by Whetten and Cameron? Do you remember how these responses affected the outcome of the issue and the feelings of those involved when a decision was reached?

Not surprisingly, the collaborative approach is considered the most effective way to resolve interpersonal disputes and to negotiate a way forward. Whetten and Cameron (1993) argue that the other four approaches have serious drawbacks:

- **Force and accommodation**: in both, one side has to give way in order for agreement to be reached. This is the competitive approach, which relies heavily on taking a competitive stance and on the assumption that someone will lose out. Both also depend on power relations, with the stronger party using their formal or informal authority to push through the desired decision. The dangers are lack of real discussion and potential backlash.

- **Avoidance**: in conflict resolution this means that people avoid attempting to solve things, as they believe the costs to be too high, so the problem is left to simmer.

- **Compromise**: everyone involved makes sacrifices to find common ground; the split-the-difference line. Expediency is all-important, which leads to more rapid decisions but also promotes game playing, particularly asking for twice as much as needed at the start.

By contrast, collaboration is seen as win-win, in which both sides gain. Done well, it encourages both sides to clarify their own self-interest and goals. But it is the most difficult approach to use successfully as it requires considerable interpersonal skills.

Whetten and Cameron (1993) and Northcraft and Neale (1990) describe similar collaborative negotiating strategies:

1. **Be clear about the issues.** What is the dispute or the disagreement to be negotiated? This requires research and creative thinking. Develop a range of possible ways forward.

2. **Establish common goals.** If all parties to the negotiation begin by focusing on shared interests and shared goals then they are more likely to appreciate the value of resolving their differences and reaching mutual agreement.

3. **Depersonalise the discussions.** Focus on the issue and separate it from the personalities involved. Aim to depersonalise discussions. Negotiators who are looking for revenge or trying to get one up on someone are likely to jeopardise the process. Consider the negotiators as advocates rather than rivals. Say ‘That is an unreasonable position’ rather than ‘You are an unreasonable person’. But this is not to say that you should not consider the personalities of those involved. You will need to consider how you approach people in the light of their personality traits.
4 **Concentrate on interests and not positions.** Agreement is easier if all parties consider the interests or the reasons behind the stance or the demands being made by any one party. Try to understand why someone wants to achieve a particular objective.

5 **Come up with ideas that benefit everyone.** Use creativity to come up with mutually acceptable ideas. Brainstorming can help imaginative or novel ideas to emerge, increasing the number of options and thus the possibility of reaching a mutually satisfying agreement. Also, this approach will help keep the focus on collaboration rather than competition.

6 **Make use of objective criteria.** No matter how well-intentioned the parties are there is always the chance that incompatible interests will lead to disagreement or conflict. To avoid this, objective criteria should be agreed which will enable everyone to decide what is fair and reasonable. This will encourage people to focus on what is just and sensible rather than on getting the best deal for themselves. It also allows people to take a more open attitude and so avoid taking rigid non-negotiable stances.

7 **Define outcomes in terms of gain rather than loss.** Focus on what has been gained rather than what has not been achieved. A glass that is half full is more satisfying than one that is half empty.

8 Once you have agreed on a way forward, then be clear about the agreement and who will do what and when, so as to avoid misunderstandings. If follow-up activity or monitoring is needed, then agree how this is to be carried out, by whom and when.

In civil war and postwar environments, there are also at least three factors which make collaborative negotiation, between and within organisations, very difficult:

1 The civil war and postwar environment is rapidly changing, so everyone's information is partial.

2 Agendas of competing or important organisations, or even your own organisation, as well as decisions already made, may be antithetical to the needs of peacebuilding. For example, perhaps an important donor decides to exclude a certain violent leader from the peace talks, even though a carefully grounded analysis shows he commands a significant popular following with real grievances. Or you may find yourself in a situation where ever tighter restrictions imposed on field staff by head office make it more difficult to work.

3 Not everyone is what they seem. People may be unhelpful and even destructive in their behaviours. People may be acting out of self-interest, for example, pursuing objectives based on what is best for their own careers rather than what is best for the situation. People may lie, cheat, bully and intimidate to get what they want.

Use of information is one way to reduce the impact of these three factors. Within your own organisation, you can help your colleagues and superiors to understand and appreciate your concerns if you keep them up to date.
The information you provide – within your organisation, to others with whom you are negotiating, and to the media and public – should lead to an understanding of the day-to-day issues of peacebuilding. Use information carefully, to promote other options rather than to criticise earlier decisions and positions.

**SCENARIO 7**

Our final scenario is one where the factors working against agreement may be overwhelming. Two years ago you were appointed as Country Director of END POVERTY for a small African country. A bitter civil war had forced the office to close and you were to reopen the office and get water projects rolling once more. To you it was the dream job, and offered you a real chance to deliver on some meaningful projects. You have been very successful. You have established excellent working relationships with local officials and there has been considerable genuine local capacity building. At a recent meeting with the Minster for Water Affairs you were publicly congratulated on your role in helping with post-civil-war reconstruction.

Unexpectedly, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of END POVERTY takes early retirement. His replacement is a man with limited NGO experience but considerable experience in the commercial sector; and he argues that END POVERTY has to change to make itself more distinctive and different from other development NGOs. He argues that there is a significant niche in the market for those with management expertise in development and he proposes to put the emphasis on providing development consultancy services to developing country governments, and to sharply reduce involvement in actual projects. In particular, END POVERTY should stop working in water because there are so many other NGOs in that sector; established projects have six months to be wound up. You speak briefly on the phone to your line manager, expressing your dismay at the new line. He is unsympathetic and totally supportive of the new approach and the new CEO. This surprises you, as he had always been so pro-development projects and capacity building, but now he sees consultancy as the way forward.

What are you to do? Consider your options and your likely responses at this point.

You want to maintain water projects and capacity building. Accordingly, you prepare a detailed report, which argues the need to keep the water projects going, as the country still needs support in the aftermath of a devastating civil war. To pull out now is too soon and could damage END POVERTY’s reputation in your part of Africa. You speak to a number of colleagues in headquarters who are prepared to support your arguments. Your report is sent to your line manager and, after some negotiation, it is agreed that you may extend the projects – but only for another six months.

Instead of simply closing the projects, you find other NGOs that would be prepared to fund some of the existing projects. This is very good news as it means that several important projects will be able to continue.

But there is no time to consider consultancy initiatives and anyway you have very little enthusiasm for this. You are invited to attend a number of management