The nature of violent conflict is changing.

Empirically, incidences of violent conflict are down. However, violent conflicts today are affecting more civilians than ever before. Violent conflict is having a dramatic impact on civilians in terms of displacement, death, and the burdens of ongoing conflict. Also, conflicts are increasingly dominated by non-state actors, rather than nation-state actors.

There is a "peace dilemma" when peacebuilding actors are not allowed to deal with terror groups -- or have no interchange or communication. We've lost the ability to bring together the perpetrators of violent conflict post 9/11.

Corruption:
The political ethics of money has changed. We need to reframe this as: corruption is a functioning system to amass resources for the criminal elite that has taken over the government. The government becomes a vertically integrated criminal organization. Governing becomes a front activity to camouflage their real activities (from the West). Their citizens are not fooled, and over time, this structural corruption leads to indignation amongst citizens. Traditional sacred values -- such as justice and education -- are violated when kleptocratic elites extort money. This leads to indignation and to conflict and to possible puritanical responses.

We need to study the mechanisms at play:
- the levers of state power
- the revenue streams
- how we (the U.S.) contributes to the revenue streams directly or indirectly
- the key enablers (banks, lobbyists, accounting firms, photos w/U.S. leaders) that infuriate citizens against the U.S. for being an enabler.
Oil:
An oil based civilization is unsustainable. It is the largest resource in history and we cannot live without it. It has produced the largest percentage of money, in the hands of the fewest. The majority of jihadists are funded by Saudi (oil), hijacking the Arab Spring moment into jihadi disasters. Oil based economies put unlimited resources into the hands of a very few who aren't controlled by their king or emir. ISIS is Sadam's special forces who were unemployed when Iraq fell. They are tied to oil and have gotten rich off of black market oil revenues.

America is not behaving rationally in the world because of our allies and because of our own corruption. Our allie system is corrupted because of our military industrial complex and oil based economy. We should be in good relation with both sides of the Gulf -- with Iran and Saudi.

What Does Not Work:
- The CIA has a separate foreign policy which is counterproductive.
- Our policies in Afghanistan have been driven by the Pentagon. The Pentagon needs Capitol Hill; Capitol Hill is corrupted by campaign finance and the military industrial complex, and depends on contracts and jobs at home.
- We need new ways to think about what constitutes strong and robust Presidential leadership, without resorting to bombs and violence.
- The foreign policy establishment narrows the dialogue too quickly. People are not comfortable going outside the norms and it's often outside the comfort zone where you can find something that may be effective.
- There are enormous industry pressures: defense, intelligence, humanitarian, development. We (civil society) need to help inform policy makers and keep asking the tough questions.
- There is not an industry in the peacebuilding space. We haven't created that industrial sector yet.
- The tools and instruments we have today aren't suited -- and don't fit -- today's challenges.

However, many large drivers of social change are going well:
- women's empowerment
- employment based on commerce between majorities and minorities
- human rights -- empathy - understanding the other
Where we can improve:

- we need a clear vision
- we need a rational foreign policy
- we must have a deep relationship with Iran
- we must understand the nature of what's going on. Demystify religion. Religion is not just religion. Often it is a cover for corruption. It's about grievances, power, majorities and minorities.
- we must strengthen our analysis and deeply know the places where intend to work.
- we need to have relationships with non-state actors (ex. the Syrian rebels). We do not understand who they are and what drives them.
- we should limit what we intend to do. We need a prioritized strategy, and we cannot allow industries to drive our strategy.
- we need to insist on local ownership from the beginning. It's their problem. We cannot make it right.
- we must offer catalytic assistance to the silent majorities.
- we need real time evaluation and measurement. Today's good idea is quickly outdated in the disruptive places we work.
- asymmetric diplomacy is required.
- make a difference BEFORE a conflict becomes the next hot spot. Waiting until conflict is at an apex is too late. ex. we should focus now on Mauritania and on Honduras, where we can still make a difference, while the conflict is lower down on the conflict scale.
- The first question we should ask is, what is the reality on the ground? is it about land / or identity/ or corruption? Know what the complexities are and then you can know who your allies should be.
- we need empathy, compassion and respect based on analysis and deep knowledge. Robust engagement with respect, dignity and compassion will make us learn better and figure out better solutions together with local people. This applies to people who are our allies, our enemies, and to people at the grass routes levels.
- learning is the centerpiece. Don't approach the problem with preferred arguments and theories or a fixed mindset. Customize. Be rigorous.

On the Horizon: We cannot be in denial -- these are the major challenges facing us now.
- Climate change will create massive disruption and social movement.
• Miniature weapons of mass destruction would cause unimaginable chaos and destruction and are a looming threat.
• Mega crises (ex. the tsunami followed by nuclear meltdown) are ever more probable..