

NATO's General Breedlove about the "Long War"

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Global Research, December 16, 2014

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Evan Solomon, of CBC's The House, recently had an interview with NATO's current leading figure, four star General Philip Mark Breedlove, the seventeenth Supreme Allied Commander Europe. It was a fairly benign interview with no hard questions posed to the most powerful person in Europe. The answers were much more rational than someone from the Republican right domestically may have provided, but they demonstrate the understandable bias of the 'western' views vis a vis NATO, ISIS, and Russia/Ukraine.

Breedlove does not come across as someone who is itching for a fight with Russia, nor for the aerial bombing of Syria, perhaps cognizant of his audience which may not be quite as patriotically or geopolitically committed to having NATO contain and dismantle Russia and Syria.

The usual western bias runs through the interview. It is hard to tell whether Solomon's soft questioning is due to deference to the power of General Breedlove or due to his own inability to understand the overall geopolitical structures and events surrounding these two areas of military confrontation. The corollary could hold true, that Breedlove was deferring to a possible more pacifist audience than he might consider if he were addressing a Republican party convention. Or more than likely, both: the questions were vetted before agreement was made for the interview, and the responses were well considered before the interview.

Part I - Terrorists first

After introducing the idea of the ISIS video tape from Canadian John Maguire espousing radical Islam, Solomon ask what is the General's "response to threats like this?" The response evoked "history...all the way back to 9/11" a sure point in which to start any talk about terror. It identifies the speaker as one who accepts the official view that the demolition of the three Trade Center buildings was the work of mostly Saudi's flying planes into two of the buildings. Most of the world does not accept the official version, and most of the world is certainly aware of terrorism well before 9/11.

When asked if domestic terror was on the rise, Breedlove responded that all are "concerned with foreign fighters bringing back the trade-craft, the approaches, and - frankly - the attitudes that they have adopted." Well, dang those attitudes! If they had different attitudes, they could have been on our side using their trade-craft and approaches on our enemies - but wait, perhaps they are, when an enemy of my enemies' enemy is my....uh....friend? After all, ISIS is begotten from al-Nusra with al-Qaeda, from Iraq, begot from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, begot from the Taliban and from the mujahideen of the "freedom fighters" of the Reagan Era. All supported by our wonderful ally, Saudi Arabia (but wait, did they not attack the WTC?).

When asked if NATO's approach changes because of that situation, Breedlove provides a 'nice' sounding answer about "greater cooperation and communications among like-minded nations" for "understanding the movement and addressing the threats that are created in our home nations." As for Iraq, if invited in, NATO's efforts would entail "building partnership capability, helping the Iraqi army, training it to help it reconstitute and become a more capable fighting force." Hmm, did they not already try that once, over a period of ten years, an obvious massive failure? Not only a failure but one that was a prime tap root for the development of al-Qaeda in Iraq and thus ISIS.

It is when Solomon asks about timelines that a real glimpse of the overall geopolitical picture looms into view, root causes and all. The response is definitive, sort of,

"This is a long term not a short term fight. Until we address the root causes of these kinds of issues, we can expect to have to deal with these kinds of issues so much like we put great pressure on the problem in Afghanistan and we see it now erupt in sub-Saharan Africa, the eastern part of Africa, Iraq, Syria - so, um, my estimation is this is a long term issue not a short term issue."

Wow, there is a lot to deal with there:

pressure in Afghanistan (how's that working out for you now, in consideration of pipelines and resources and Russia and China among other problems); obviously did not work (or did it?) as things are now "erupting" elsewhere (how convenient for the long war and the long arms of the Pentagon-NATO-CIA et al) and don't forget Saharan Africa, the wonderful democracy you brought to Libya and the coup d'etat you supported in Egypt.

Solomon followed up with a logical question, one that leans towards tough, when asking about root causes, "What exactly are you referring to when you say that?"

The response is both disingenuous and biased towards the standard western misconceptions about causes of terrorism. The disingenuity comes from Breedlove's first comment that "I'm not the smart guy here, but what I've heard smart people talk about...." Okay, you're not the smart guy, but you're in charge of all NATO forces? Of course, both of those may be true....

But moving on, Breedlove continues,

"...until we understand how to bring jobs, how to bring education, how to make governments responsive to their people, how do we have nations that meet the expectations of safety, health, and education of their people and other things, we will end up with those that can be easily radicalized, so we have to get at some of the root issues."

The same idea is repeated in a followup question about radicals domestically, terror "may be more about radicalization than it is about root causes of poverty, health and lack of a responsive government."

Wonderful, nice sentiments, well spoken - and wrong.

Studies from diverse groups, left and right wing think tanks, identify social alienation as

being the underlying 'root' of people who become 'radicalized', who become terrorists. Poverty has little if anything to do with it, nor does - obviously then - jobs. Education does have something to do with it as the majority of terrorist/suicide bombers are generally considered generally well educated people.

The root cause that is never brought up by the west, for obvious reasons, is the alienation of a person socially, generally highlighted by identifying with the subjects of colonial settler imperialism, either in its original form as in Israel/Palestine, or in its latter day geopolitical fight for control of global resources in order to protect the empire's power and dominance.

Of course, taking Breedlove's comment on root causes domestically - about education, safety, health and responsive governments - it would certainly be well and good if all those ideas were applied at home first. That part of the discussion finished, the questions were then turned to the Ukrainian situation as it affects NATO.

Part II - Russia/Ukraine second

For what it does say, the interview section on Russia/Ukraine is pretty innocuous within its western oriented bias, but it is more of what it does not say that is truly important - which is why lots of material - and lots of possible questions - was probably left out altogether.

The first question requested a response to Putin's comment that a ceasefire may be agreed upon soon. The response was essentially that would be good with the pro-west caveat that (implied) Russia should "cease fueling the conflict in eastern Ukraine and that includes Mr. Putin and his military which continues to push across supplies and capabilities into eastern Ukraine." Okay, but there are greater omissions in this statement.

But first, Solomon's next set of questions clearly delineates the western bias towards Russia as the aggressor,

This is subject to lots of propaganda and misinformation. What is Russia doing in eastern Ukraine? Are they sending in supplies? Do they control places like Donetsk, Luhansk? Is eastern Ukraine essentially one step away from this kind of Crimean situation?

The non-contextual answer - relatively accurate, but fully one-sided - indicates "we see overt and not overt resupply happening all the time....they provide the backbone to the Russian backed forces who are there fighting the Ukrainian forces in this Donbas region." Again, okay, but with greater omissions in this reply.

Using more biased language when discussing the increase in Russian military flights in international airspace, Solomon refers to them as "incursions" with "provocative routes" before asking "What are the Russians doing?"

The generally non-committal and non-aggressive response prompted a follow up question, "But what are they trying to say? What is Putin trying to say when he is flying aircraft so provocatively towards NATO countries?" C'mon Evan, "provocatively towards NATO" - surely you know better, and if you don't - then your whole interview with the NATO top gun becomes nothing more than ignorant propaganda.

The response is again well considered, "I agree with those who say he is messaging us, that he has the capability to do this and that his military has the capabilities to bring these pressures to bear on its neighbours."

Solomon then turns the questions towards the NATO “spearhead” force, with the response indicating it is more of a political show than a truly military one – if indeed it would take “days” to activate in case of war, that would simply be too late. In relation to this a question is posed concerning Canada’s contributions as a part of the financial costs of military operations. The obvious answer is yes, the NATO chief would like Canada to commit more, but then provides the red herring argument that NATO spending is down 20 per cent, while Russia’s spending is up 50 per cent.

Sounds extremely lopsided unless one considers that Russia is recovering from – or was before the Saudi oil war – the economic losses incurred by the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, NATO does include the U.S., the world’s largest military budget by far, increasing from \$300 billion in 1990 to over \$700 billion in 2013, not including all those items outside the actual budget such as the nuclear complex and all the spy and surveillance agencies. While NATO may be down 20 per cent, U.S. spending is up 200 per cent over the same time period. All of NATO combined supplied budgets of over one trillion dollars (all US\$ for comparison) against Russia’s 90 billion dollar budget.

The final question concerns what is seen for 2015. Breedlove accurately responds that is a very short time line, and simply indicates the same old situations, “problems with the Islamic State and other Islamic extremists around the area...try to normalize our relationship in the eastern European nations....address the issues of the Donbas, to address the issues of Crimea,” mostly “much of the same.”

Greater omissions

There is so much that is not discussed in this interview, which is what makes me believe that it was a vetted discussion for both parties. Most of what was not discussed was the greater context. Perhaps the following could have been asked,

Does the U.S. support the neo-Nazi members of the current Ukrainian government?

Did the U.S. participate in any way in the Maidan coup d’etat? What is it contributing to Ukraine now?

How long has the U.S. been preparing the dissolution of the Ukrainian government in order to gain control for NATO expansion and economic exploitation in the EU?

Why did NATO expand its boundaries to be adjacent to those of Russia after they had agreed that, with the unification of Germany, NATO would not expand eastward?

Why has the U.S. positioned anti-ballistic and nuclear missiles in eastern Europe if Iran – the excuse – has neither atomic weapons nor the capability of delivering any?

Is the U.S. willing to pull back on its military displays of force around the world in order to get Russia to end its flights around the world in international air space?

What will be the effects of Congress’ passing the Ukraine Freedom Support Act 2014 that authorizes Kyiv defense weapons worth \$350 million?

...and there are many more questions that could be asked, about pre-9/11 terror (mostly centred on Israel/Palestine), about U.S. alliances with theocratic tribal Saudi Arabia and its fundamentalist supporters of terrorists, about the various pipelines that run through Syria,

Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran - imagine - all those countries the U.S. has attacked and occupied or wishes to attack and occupy.

Russia-Ukraine and Syria-ISIS are not separate sets of incidents but are fully entwined within U.S. drives towards global hegemony. It is the dying empire's attempt to guard the petrodollar and its power as it has always maintained that power, through military and financial manipulations pretty much everywhere in the world. NATO is a pawn in that world.

Overall, I am much more impressed by Breedlove's generally benign responses, considering the man's position in the global power structure. I am much less impressed with Solomon's questions and their biased leading language and intent.

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