

Katonah Great Decisions Chapter
February 8, 2011 – “Reshaping U.S. National Security
Notes by Elizabeth Hall

Word was given that we would have evening programs on April 6 and May 4, and perhaps on May 10.

CYBERTHREATS were considered the major risk/impediment for U.S. National Security. The Stuxnet, a computer worm that is viewed as potentially the most dangerous piece of computer malware discovered, has targeted industrial computers in Iran, including their first nuclear power plant. We're showing the Iranians what cyberthreats are.

The younger the person, the more comfortable they are with advanced cybertechnology. If apple computer has its way, another sea change in computer design is coming up. World ways of living will continue to change. We're still working with computers that use von Neumann architectural systems.

Is the magnitude of this problem enough to make us work with allies? Von Neumann design inherently has weaknesses. If you can speed up the computer enough, you might be able to overcome its slow, vulnerable function. Jeopardy Watson was created by IBM specifically to play jeopardy. [Watson was shown on NOVA, 10 p.m., Feb 9, PBS, 13] This represents a major advance in computer speed and power; Watson does parallel processing, like human beings.

Everything is hackable; it just takes a long time.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

If Korea didn't have nuclear weapons, non-proliferation would be a piece of cake. But nuclear weapons are not N.Korea's only card. They have an old Russian missile system that is all in place. First strike would knock out Seoul. The size of the N. Korean army is enormous.

Al Qaeda started out with the intention to bleed America and strip away her allies.

U.S. polarization has made the government nonfunctional.

Maybe we should not get over involved in some part of the world. Maybe we should worry about accidents, illnesses, things we can do something about. People seem to be less interested in the world today. Maybe we'll go through a period of isolation.

Education is a problem that's getting scarier. Today, 50 percent of our engineering and science undergrads are foreign citizens.

Is it in China's interested to keep holding U.S. bonds? Over the last few months they've been doing more than simply holding bonds.

Not everyone needs the same kind of education, but there's a stigma on BOCES education. It's not only important what you teach, but how you teach.

How do you get the conversation started. Affluent individuals create corporate foundations for education. Nobody wants to combine school districts.

The average county employee costs \$120,000 in taxes to cover all of his benefits (health ins., vacation, pension, etc.). There must be some kind of symbiosis between employees and officials. No, the officials are not necessarily collaborating with the employees.

There'll be no progress until we have campaign finance reform. The day after the election, the victorious candidates are spending all their time on the phone trying to raise money for the next election.

More involvement is needed. We need to bring our troops back from around the world. Use that money. What happens when you bring the troops back and have no jobs for them.

Our troops were perceived as predatory, no matter where we sent them.

Current Japanese Navy is the largest in the South Pacific. There's concern that we might let the Japanese take over the U.S. Navy's job (since WWII) of keeping the shipping lanes clear. Not a good idea.

Is the balance of the Chinese-American Navy changing in the Pacific?

The most important thing is military decision-making.