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NEWS IN BRIEF

After A Nightmarish Childhood in Antoura, Hope And Salvation

By **Alin K. Gregorian**
Mirror-Spectator Staff

WATERTOWN – Most children do not have clear ideas about their parents' childhoods. They might hear bits and pieces and use their imaginations to color in the lives of their parents as children. Perhaps few can imagine the stories of *Goodbye, Antoura*, the memoirs of Karnig Panian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide.

Panian's memoirs were first published in Armenian in 1992 by Hamazkayin Cultural Association and the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia. Now the volume has been translated into English, and published this year by the Stanford University Press, with a foreword by Dr. Vartan Gregorian. It has received great reviews both in the US and Lebanon.

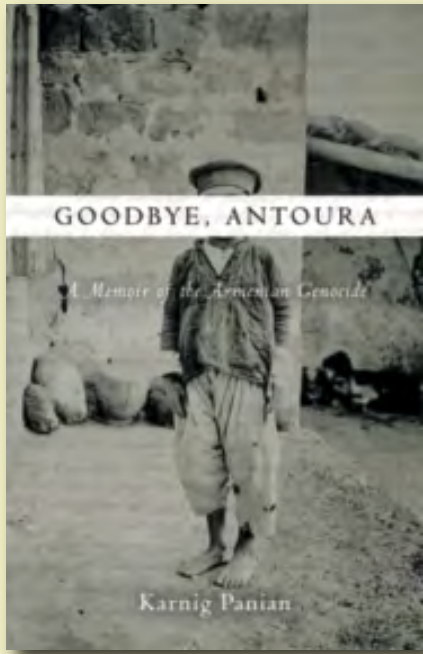


Karnig Panian

Panian was born in Gurin in 1910. He was 5 when his mother and a younger sister and brother perished during the forcible marches. His father had been among the men who had been rounded up by the authorities in a previous sweep.

His story is at once astonishingly sad and yet hopeful. A boy who shifted between four orphanages, one of which, Antoura, was a proverbial hell on earth, became an erudite and educated man who married and had children and eventually became the vice principal at Djemaran, the Armenian Lyceum, in Beirut.

The contents were at times shocking for
see ANTOURA, page 9



NY Reception Honors Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanian

Receives Award at Southern Conn. University

By **Arpiar Hagopian**

NEW YORK – Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanian, president of the Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, has been visiting the United States since September 9 at the invitation of Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). Dr. Mary Papazian, president of SCSU, awarded Mirzakhanian with the highest honor of her university on September 10 at the John Lyman Performing Arts Center Gallery at SCSU
see HONORS, page 8



Prof. Rouben Mirzakhanian receiving at Southern Connecticut University award from SCSU President Dr. Mary Papazian

Consul General Visits Aleppo Orphanage and Nursing Home

ALEPPO (Public Radio of Armenia) – On the occasion of Armenia's Independence Day, Armenian Consul General to Syria Tigran Gevorgyan visited the Armenian home for the elderly in Aleppo.

Gevorgyan toured the nursing home accompanied by its director, members of the board of trustees and the leader of Syria's Armenian evangelical community and talked to the elderly people that live there.

The consul general congratulated them on the 24th anniversary of Armenia's independence and assured that the issues of the Syrian Armenians, especially the aged people and children, are always a part of the focus of attention of the Armenian authorities.

Gevorgyan expressed gratitude to the staff of the nursing home for their devoted work. The same day he visited the Armenian orphanage. He congratulated its young residents on the occasion of the start of the new academic year and wished them every success in their studies. He assured them that the consulate general would continue to assist the orphanage. Gevorgyan and the leadership of the orphanage discussed the possibility of organizing the summer vacation of the children in Armenia.

Armenian Defects to Azerbaijan

BAKU (RFE/RL) – An Armenian man has defected to Azerbaijan.

Vahan Martirosian, the head of the non-governmental organization Internal National Liberation Movement, told reporters in Baku on September 18 that he had requested political asylum in Azerbaijan.

He slammed the policies of Armenian President Serge Sargisian, calling them anti-Armenian, and said Azerbaijani media are the only sources offering "truthful information" about the current situation in Armenia.

Martirosian claimed that he had been persecuted by Armenian authorities for his political activities and therefore decided to defect to Azerbaijan together with his wife and their toddler son.

The Armenian Investigative Committee said on September 17 after reports about Martirosian's defection started circulating in regional media that Martirosian had been added to a wanted list.

Sona Truzian, an adviser to the Armenian Investigative Committee's chairman, said that Martirosian was suspected of stealing the equivalent of \$4,000 in Yerevan.

Truzian also said that Martirosian had filed a complaint claiming that he and his wife had been attacked by the security personnel of an Armenian lawmaker but never showed up to talk to investigators.

Settlement with Armenian Church Allows Getty Museum Keep Prized Bible Pages

By **Mike Boehm**

LOS ANGELES (*Los Angeles Times*) – The Getty Museum will keep eight brilliantly illustrated table of contents pages from a 750-year-old Armenian Bible after settling a long-running lawsuit brought by an American branch of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

The church contended they had been illegally separated from the rest of the book amid the Armenian genocide during World War I.

The Getty and the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America jointly announced the settlement Monday. Both sides said they were happy with the outcome, but for very different reasons.

The Getty gets to keep the art, and the church gets recognition that all along it has been the rightful owner of the pages, which were separated about 100 years ago from a complete Bible called the *Zeyt'un* gospels.

The rest of the book is at the Matenadaran, a museum and library for manuscripts in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. The Getty bought its pages in 1994 from an Armenian-American family for \$1.5 million in today's dollars.
see SETTLEMENT, page 16



President Serge Sargisian, Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and other dignitaries

Armenia Marks Independence

YEREVAN (Combined Sources) – On September 21, Armenia marked the 24th anniversary of its independence. A total of 94.99 percent of Armenian citizens said a resolute "yes" to independence by means of a referendum in 1990 in favor of secession from the Soviet Union. Two days later, on September 23, the Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic declared the
see INDEPENDENCE, page 3

Independence Day Celebrated in New York City

NEW YORK – The 24th anniversary of the independence of Armenia was celebrated on September 20 at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral under the auspices of Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) and Amb. of the Republic of Armenia to the United Nations Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. The organizer was Noyan Tapan, with the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavars), Tekeyan Cultural Association (TCA), the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, and the Armenian Assembly of America serving



as cosponsors. Speakers included Knights' Grand Commander Steve Kradjian, Armenian Assembly Executive Director Bryan Ardouny, TCA of Greater New York Chairman Hagop Vartivarian, and Mnatsakanyan. Archbishop Yeghishe Gizirian made the closing remarks. The above photo includes participants in the program.

INSIDE

Welcome, Citizen!

Page 5

INDEX

Arts and Living	10
Armenia	2,3
Community News	5
Editorial	14
International	4

Community News

Celebrating New St. Nersess Armenian Seminary Campus

ARMONK, N.Y. – “After years of planning, dedication and faith, supporters of St. Nersess Armenian Seminary will celebrate the seminary’s move to its new Armonk, New York campus on November 22, at the Rockleigh Country Club in Rockleigh, New Jersey,” states fundraising chair Haig Ariyan. “The Sunday evening banquet, which will be presided over by Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese and President of the St. Nersess Board of Directors, will honor grand benefactors Haig and Elza Didizian of London, England. Through their generosity and vision, a new chapel and the Karekin I Theological Center, which will include offices, classrooms and a library, are being constructed. The new facility will provide seminarians a place to learn, study, and prepare for service in the Armenian Church for years to come.”

The St. Nersess Board of Directors invites clergy, alumni, faculty, summer conference alumni and supporters and friends of the seminary to attend the gala dinner.

Since its founding 54 years ago, St. Nersess has continued to provide clergy and lay leaders to the Armenian Church throughout America and the world. This has been achieved while respecting and perpetuating the ancient traditions of our Armenian Church. In addition to the thorough curriculum and course work required to graduate, the seminary has recently added unique offerings, including an Acculturation Program for priests from abroad, as well as specialized workshops for clergy already serving as parish priests.

The banquet has been fully underwritten by a donor. Reservations are \$200 per person and all ticket sales will directly benefit St. Nersess Seminary’s mission and operations. In addition, a commemorative booklet honoring the seminary’s history and recognizing its donors will be published for the event. All supporters of the seminary are encouraged to donate to the booklet as all proceeds will benefit the seminary. Invitation and booklet donation information can be found on the seminary’s website, www.stnersess.edu.

Cocktails will begin at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. There will be a short program which will include a tribute to the seminary’s proud history and to Mr. and Mrs. Didizian. The banquet committee is being chaired by Nadine Ariyan and Lucie Bandazian.

St. Nersess seminarians will be available in Armonk on November 22 from 3 to 5 p.m. for anyone wishing to see the progress on the new campus prior to the banquet. The official opening and ribbon cutting of the new facility will take place in the spring.

Additional information can be found on the website www.stnersess.edu.



Grand benefactors Haig and Elza Didizian



New citizens at Faneuil Hall

New Citizens’ Welcome Reception at Armenian Heritage Park to Feature Dr. Vartan Gregorian

BOSTON – On Thursday, October 1, a New Citizens’ Welcome Reception will be held at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway. This first-time Welcome Reception immediately follows the Naturalization Ceremony at historic Faneuil Hall where foreign-born men and women will take the Oath of Allegiance to become Naturalized Citizens. The Oath of Allegiance has led to American citizenship for more than 220 years, among them those from our own families.

Middlesex Sheriff Peter J. Koutoujian, at the conclusion of the Naturalization Ceremony, will extend the invitation to all new citizens, their families and friends to attend the Welcome Reception at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway that follows.

Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, will speak during the Park’s Welcome Reception.

“By appealing to a range of new American citizens, the Welcome Reception contributes decisively to the Armenian Heritage Park’s core mission of inclusion. As a celebration of the immigrant experience in Boston, the Welcome speaks directly to central themes of the Park and the Rose Kennedy Greenway as a whole. The Welcome will not only ‘acknowledge the history of Boston as a port of entry for immigrants worldwide,’ but also ‘celebrate those who...contribute to the richness of American life and culture,’ which is the Park’s intent,” said Armine Afeyan of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park.

The Welcome Reception is funded by the park’s Anna and Noubar Afeyan Fund, an endowed fund supporting programs at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway

The program is an initiative of the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park in collaboration with the United States District Court, City of Boston, Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the Office of New Bostonians, Bostonian Society/Old State House, Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy.

For further information, email info@ArmenianHeritagePark.org.



Dr. Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Rev. Kesablyan To Be Feted on Decade of Church Service

CHELMSFORD, Mass. – The parish of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church will honor Rev. Khachatur Kesablyan on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of his ordination into the Holy Order of Priesthood.

The event will be held on Sunday, October 4 with Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern) presiding. The day’s events will begin with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, and will be followed by a banquet and program to be held in the Kazanjian Memorial Pavilion.

Kesablyan has spent the past nine years in the United States, and began his ministry here as an intern at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge. In 2008, Kesablyan became pastor of Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Church where he has served the spiritual needs of the parish. In addition, he has been the visiting pastor for the Armenian Church of Cape Cod since 2009, and just completed his second summer as a co-director of Saint Vartan Camp in Greenville, NY. He is currently studying for his master’s degree in Theological Studies at



Khachatur Kesablyan

the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary in Brookline.

He is married to Yn. Anna Kesablyan, and together they are parents to Maria and Narek.

Sts. Vartanantz was built and consecrated in Lowell, MA in 1916, making it one of the first Armenian Churches in the United States. After almost 60 years, a decision was made to seek new facilities. In 1978, Saints Vartanantz Armenian Church was relocated to its current 16-acre property in Chelmsford, where it continues to flourish. Known for its ornate sanctuary, the church is architecturally modeled on the Cathedral of Ani. Currently, the church serves the spiritual needs of some 500 families in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire.

For further information and ticket reservations, contact the Reservations Coordinator, Patty Kayajanian at pkcookie@comcast.net.

Arts & Living

Presence of Absence: Photographing Loss And Violence

NEW HAVEN, Conn. – Armen Marsoobian, chairman of the Philosophy Department at Southern Connecticut State University and author of *Fragments of a Lost Homeland – Remembering Armenia*, was the guest at a lunchtime conversation organized by the University of Southern California (USC) Institute of Armenian Studies. The event took place on September 16 at USC Ground Zero Coffeehouse. Marsoobian was in conversation with Varun Soni, dean of Religious Life at USC.

The USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Studies co-sponsored the event.

Marsoobian, a grandchild of Genocide survivors, has devoted the past few years of his life to presenting exhibitions in Turkey of a photograph archive collected by his extended family, who were all photographers and thus saved by the Ottoman governors because they were needed. Whereas most Armenian families don't have a single picture of their families, Marsoobian has hundreds.

"These photographs are a form of bearing witness to the identities of Armenians in the most difficult times of the Armenian Genocide. They document a life and culture that was erased, and about which little is known by the new generation in Turkey," said Marsoobian.

Once Marsoobian began the process of archiving and exhibiting what was left to him by his family of photographers, it became a personal and emotional journey in addition to an academic one. He spoke about his trips to Anatolia and the importance of walking on the ground, and seeing the exact places that were



Prof. Armen Marsoobian and Varun Soni

the birthplace of Armenian culture.

Marsoobian's family story is one of prosperity, vibrant culture, and sudden loss. During the conversation, he recounted an argument between his grandparents in the summer of 1915. After they lost police protection, the family was forced to choose between joining the death marches with the rest of the exiled or convert and live as Islamized Armenians. They chose the latter, changed their names, and became hidden Armenians.

"As the generation that somehow survived by either voluntarily or involuntarily converting passes on, they are sharing their life secrets with their families. Suddenly, tens of thousands of citizens of Turkey are discovering their Armenian roots. This, in a country, where being Armenian has been reviled. We are headed for a very interesting and difficult period in Armenian-Turkish relations, and Armen Marsoobian's family treasure helps everyone better understand the past, and perhaps the future," said Salpi Ghazarian, the director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies.

Marsoobian will continue to present his exhibitions in Turkey and around the world. He is certain that sharing such photos is important for the small Armenian community remaining in Istanbul and the rest of the Armenians – whether rediscovered, or still hidden.

The full video of the discussion is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rN0aGtKEEGQ>.



The 2015 graduates

Abaka School for the Performing Arts Celebrates 21 Years

WATERTOWN – After celebrating its 20th Anniversary year, the Abaka Armenian School for the Performing Arts announces its 21st season with classes and registration now open. The Abaka School was founded in 1995 by choreographer Apo Ashjian with a simple mission: to enrich the Armenian cultural life of youngsters in our community, creating a small corner of Armenia in America.

Abaka provides an outlet for young Armenians to discover and bring forth their hidden and valuable talents, thus contributing to the future betterment of Armenian cultural life. Abaka aims to teach, through visual and performing arts, the richness of the Armenian culture and its traditions and instill in young Armenians the spirit and pride of belonging to a unique heritage.

On June 16, more than 70 students ranging from ages 4 to 16, performed in a 20th-anniversary performance at Watertown High School. During the evening a special tribute took place honoring Ashjian for his vision and inspiration over the past 20 years to the youth of the community. As the director/choreographer of the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston, his dedication and inspiration led many Abaka graduates to discovering their cultural niche and love for Armenian music and dance.

As the new owner and director of Abaka, Eddie Megrđichian, looks forward to opening the doors and welcoming Armenian youth once again this season and continuing the school's mission. Megrđichian started his dance career at the age of 7, to include performing the "Nutcracker" and has been dancing ever since. He studied under the direction of Ashjian and has been a member of the Sayat Nova Dance Company of Boston for the past 10 years.

Megrđichian has also been an instructor at Arthur Murray Dance Studios specializing in ballroom dancing and was a dance teacher at the Sts. Vartanatz Armenian School during college. He volunteers his time with Dancing with the Waltham Stars and has competed at several local area competitions. He graduated from Johnson and Wales University in Providence in 2010. He brings with him a modern vision while maintaining Armenian folkloric and classical dance.

see ABAKA, page 11



The fifth and sixth grade dancers

Author Dana Walrath to Discuss Acclaimed Novel *Like Water on Stone*

BELMONT, Mass. – Author Dana Walrath will present a talk in connection with her acclaimed novel-in-verse *Like Water on Stone* on Thursday, October 8, at 7:30 p.m., at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) Center, 395 Concord Ave.

It is 1914, and the Ottoman Empire is crumbling into violence. Beyond Anatolia, in the Armenian Highlands, Shahen Donabedian dreams of going to New York. Sosi, his twin sister, never wants to leave her home, especially now that she is in love. At first, only Papa, who counts Turks and Kurds among his closest friends, stands in Shahen's way. But when the Ottoman pashas set in motion their plans to eliminate all Armenians, neither twin has a choice.

After a horrifying attack leaves them orphaned, they flee into the mountains, carrying their little sister, Mariam. But the children are not alone. An eagle watches over them as they run at night and hide each day, making their way across mountain ridges and rivers red with blood.

Dana Walrath is the granddaughter of survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. She earned a PhD in anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania, an MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and a BA from Barnard College, Columbia University. She completed *Like Water on Stone* (Delacorte/Random House, 2014), her first novel, during the year she spent as a Fulbright Scholar in Armenia working on a project that builds on her award-winning graphic memoir series *Aliceheimer's* (Harvest, 2013).

Awards for her novel include the 2015 Notable Book for Global Society, the 2015 CBC Notable Trade Book for Social Studies, YALSA's Best Fiction Nominee for 2015, and it is a finalist for the Vermont Book Award.

Copies of *Like Water on Stone* will be available the night of the lecture.

Dr. Shemmassian Releases Book on Musa Dagh

BEIRUT – Haigazian University Press in Beirut has published Dr. Vahram L. Shemmassian's book, titled *The Musa Dagh Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History, 1919-1939*. The author writes: "The Musa Dagh resistance to the Armenian Genocide in 1915 has been immortalized by Franz Werfel's novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. Yet, despite the novel's fame and impact, to date the story of the Musa Dagh Armenians, both before and after World War I, has not been studied and recounted in a historical form." This new publication, therefore, is a pioneering effort that deals with the social, economic, and cultural life in Musa Dagh between the two world wars.

A separate tome will cover religion, education, and politics.

The study is the culmination of research spanning nearly four decades. That investigation has been conducted in numerous governmental, institutional and organizational archives, and through private papers, interviews, correspondence, unpublished memoirs and manuscripts, newspapers and periodicals, books, articles, online sources, etc.

The book includes the following eight chapters: Trying Times after Repatriation; The Social Canvas; Agriculture and Animal Husbandry; Trades, Businesses, and Industries; Migrants in the Middle East and in Ethiopia; The American Experience; Vacationing and Tourism; Cultural Manifestations. An epilogue deals with the exodus of Musadaghtsis from their native mountain to Anjar in Lebanon in 1939. The volume also contains a map, statistical tables, and appendices. It is richly illustrated. For inquiries, contact the author at shemmassian@yahoo.com.



COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Presidential Election Campaigns: Substance or Entertainment?

By Edmond Y. Azadian

We are more than a year away from the presidential election in the US, but the campaign is already in full blast.

On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton began her campaign when she left Foggy Bottom as secretary of state. Some pundits even believe that she never quit campaigning after she ceded the Democratic nomination grudgingly to Barack Obama. Perhaps that was also the reason that her early campaign hit some turbulence; her use of a private server for her official emails continues to haunt her to this day. Her mishandling of the Libya fiasco and her support of the Iraq war have dented her popularity and have undermined her trustworthiness.

As far as her hawkish stand regarding foreign policy is concerned, she can hardly be distinguished from Sen. John McCain. She seems to be completely beholden to the military industrial complex. Even more worrisome is that she seems beholden to the polls rather than genuine ideals.

Should she win her bid for the White House, the Middle East will not enjoy any peace and the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, which President Obama is trying to seal before his term is up, will suffer a setback for another four or even eight years.

That is why now she is trying to divert attention to other talking points in her campaign, including finance reform or women's issues or race issues ("Black Lives Matter").

In the Democratic camp, most of the declared candidates – Lincoln Chafee, Lawrence Lessing, Martin O'Malley and Jim Webb – are no match for Mrs. Clinton in terms of fundraising. Vice President Joe Biden is still testing the terrain but as soon as he gets his feet wet, he will realize that this year's campaign is for the sharks and not a gentle figure like him.

As far as the Clinton campaign is concerned, her only serious challenger seems to be Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont who holds a steady lead over her in New Hampshire polls. Mr. Sanders is after big banks, trade deals, tax breaks for the rich and "super PACs" like the ones pouring money into Mrs. Clinton's campaign. When Sanders declared his candidacy several months ago, he seemed like a long-shot. After all, Sanders does not do sound bites, he is an intellectual and a policy wonk trying to fix the incredibly lop-sided economy of the US.

The irony is that he is not from the rank and files of the Democratic party; he is a registered socialist and an outsider to the party's mainstream, much like Donald Trump – his very opposite in every way – is in the Republican camp.

During the first Republican debate, Trump was still toying with the idea of running as an independent candidate, sending shivers down the spines of the GOP bigwigs. Ross Perot and Ralph Nader before him had played as spoilers. But after his pledge of allegiance to the Republican party, his popularity is soaring and he seems to be within the shooting distance for the party's nomination, to the chagrin of the GOP establishment.

The huge roster of Republican candidates offers few morsels for non-partisans. After all, they are competing with each other to proclaim their faith in God, aversion to abortion, oblivion regarding climate change and evolution and ignorance of other nations.

During the recent September 16 Republican candidates' debate at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, hosted by CNN and moderated by the network's Jake Tapper, the candidates showed just what the party can offer the masses.

Behind the candidates, a replica of Air Force One dominated the stage and certainly each candidate must have imagined himself or herself flying aboard it to reach the White House.

The debate was more entertaining than substantive. The candidates were competing with each other to spit out their prepared sound bites for maximum effect. Of course, the focus was on businessman and reality TV star Donald Trump, who is known for cracking jokes, sometimes creating awkward situations. This time around, he was relatively subdued. When asked about his derogatory comments regarding candidate Carly Fiorina's appearance, instead of apologizing, he jumped the gun and said, "She is a beautiful woman." But that sounded more sarcastic than apologetic. And again, he missed the point of treating Fiorina like any other candidate rather than an objectified woman, on whose appearance he is entitled to comment, whether favorably or not.

Similarly, there was an awkward situation when he was asked to comment on his statement that Jeb Bush has been influenced by his Mexican-born wife to be soft on the immigration issue. Trump did not respond to Bush's invitation to apologize to his wife.

One area which distinguished Mr. Trump from his Republican rivals – who were ready to tear up the Iran nuclear deal and bomb the world – was that he said while he was for a strong militaristic America, he would give a chance to diplomacy first (like Rand Paul).

However, his moderation did not help to avoid a scathing characterization by the *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who wrote, "His ego may be galaxy-sized, but this policy ignorance is a void that overflows the known universe. He is the Wizard of Oz. When the bluster curtain falls down, what's left is pathetic."

Mr. Brooks is equally unmerciful towards the one segment of the Republican party whose comments boil down to a few negative policy positions, which are summed up in the following statement: "One group wants to rip up the political process and disrupt everything. Renounce the Iran deal on Day 1, no matter what our allies say. Ignore the Supreme Court and effectively disallow gay marriage. Shut down the government to defund Planned Parenthood. Magically deport the 11 million illegal immigrants. ..."

"The others, like Lindsey Graham, John Kasich and Jeb Bush, live within the confines of reality."

This, of course, is as far as domestic policy is concerned. On foreign policy, they mostly agreed on a hawkish philosophy, to boost American military power and talk to the rest of the world with the butt of the gun. Rand Paul stood alone in opposing that trigger-happy philosophy.

Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, both descendants of Cuban immigrants, tried to out-American their non-Hispanic rivals. Fiorina, who may have won a few points on her dramatic presentation on abortion, stated that the first day in the White House, she would call Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, assure him of America's support and then threaten the mullahs of Iran. This kind of servility does not surprise the public any more, when a candidate puts a foreign nation's interests – no matter how friendly – above the US. There were other candidates tripping over themselves to address the Israeli lobby rather than the listeners, including Cruz and Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas. The latter sounded more like George Bush, who held the Bible and created mayhem in Iraq, with one million civilian casualties and 4,500 US military deaths, not to mention the two trillion dollars of wasted money.

Ted Cruz did not miss the opportunity to send a message to the gun lobby.

Another child of immigrants, Piyush "Bobby" Jindal, a Rhodes Scholar who studied at Oxford (declining acceptances to Harvard Medical School and Yale Law School), would rather cut the budget for Louisiana schools and break teachers' unions.

Jeb Bush had a complacent attitude with body language which indicated that he already has a lock on the nomination through dynastic entitlement. (Interestingly, he shares that posture with Democrat rival Clinton.) But he was startled when the moderator asked him why he says he wants to be his own man, yet he has assembled his brother's advisors, the neocon cabal of Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith and others, who ignited all the devastating wars.

Mr. Bush was not able to answer directly, as he was caught off guard.

Almost all candidates tried to enumerate their achievements and their plans to rebuild America. They also had disparaging remarks about President Obama, despite the improvement in the economy, the passage of the Affordable Care Act which has given millions healthcare and his foreign policy victories in Cuba and Iran through negotiations rather than weaponry.

As entertaining as the debate was, the thought that one of those on the stage might actually become president and have the fate of the people of this country and even the world in the palm of his or her hand was chilling.

The majority of immigrant Armenians used to vote solidly Democratic. As their economic status improved, the majority has switched to the Republican camp. Of course, as any other citizens, Armenians have to vote with their consciences and their pocketbooks. But it helps to have our hands in both parties, in an organized way.

Many US citizens – including those who are naturalized – do not see nor care what their elected officials do in planning America's foreign policy. But Armenians, like the Jews, need to be vigilant. When we vote for warmongers, they spread devastation in regions where Armenians live and the community's safety is in jeopardy. Beware also those candidates who plan to send the specter of war to the regions Armenia is located.

We will be witnessing more entertaining debates. But let us think soberly when we are ready to vote.

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