

BOOK REVIEWS

Stepping Out of the Brain Drain: Applying Catholic Social Teaching in a New Era of Migration. Lexington Books, Lanham Maryland. Pp. 235

Michele R. Pistone and John J. Hoeffner,

This compact and clearly argued book represents the collaborative effort of two lawyers who dedicate the same kind of attention to Catholic social teaching that they would to preparing a brief before an Appellate Court. Their central argument is that Catholic social teaching on migration should be revised because it adopts an unduly negative stance towards the so-called "brain drain" phenomenon; which they prefer to term: "STEP OUT" migration. Here the acronym "STEP OUT" refers to migration of Scientific, Technical and Educated Professionals Out of Underdeveloped Territories. As this shift also indicates, Pistone and Hoeffner wish to avoid talking about this kind of migration as if it were an ineluctable process

governed by the physical laws of gravity. Instead they prefer to describe it as the result of individual choices, which must be understood in the context of individual life plans and which can later be changed or retracted.

The book is structured around eighteen short chapters, each of which tackles a particular part of the "case" being made by the authors and does so in a way which is persuasive, enlightening and very well documented. A wealth of empirical evidence is assembled to show how STEP OUT migrants, particularly in modern conditions of globalization and using modern technologies of communication, usually maintain close ties with and participate in their communities of origin even while they are working in another state. Often the decision to emigrate to look for work can no longer be considered as a permanent one but is best viewed as a stage in one's career, in which an eventual return to the country of origin is clearly envisaged. Moreover, they show how these migrants often succeed in boosting the economic development of their regions of origin, whether through the remittances they send, through transnational projects they

initiate or through the knowledge transfers they facilitate.

This argument serves to throw a new light on the Church's social doctrine in this field, which the authors also contextualize. They do so by showing how it was based on partial and faulty economic studies and also reflected the conception of the brain drain as a zero-sum game that was the dominant common sense in international relations and economics at the time when it was formulated. In line with their understanding that STEP OUT migration can be a win-win scenario, the authors recommend that the Church not only revise its social doctrine in this regard, but also *inter alia* that it find ways of encouraging these migrants to see it as their duty to maintain productive ties with their homelands and to put pressure on sending and host states to facilitate the development of such ties.

While the central argument being made in this book may at first appear to concern only Catholics, in reality the theme is much broader. The central question is whether an assessment of the benefits and disadvantages of migration is best undertaken from the vantage point of the state or

from that of the individual migrant. By opting for the latter, the authors are well placed to show how relying on the resourcefulness and agility of the individual migrant is not only a stance which respects her dignity and human rights, but also makes possible a less prejudiced view of what STEP OUT migrants are really trying to achieve. Once the decision to emigrate is not automatically labeled as a betrayal of one's homeland, the possibility that these emigrants may construct multiple affiliations and may seek to use their migration project as a means to contribute to their communities of origin must be given its due weight.

At the same time, referring to the multiple affiliations of migrants points to one aspect of the argument made in this book which this reviewer feels is somewhat under-explored and that is the attitude which is required of the hosting state in order to enable the kinds of ties with their homelands which the authors are advocating. The modern nation-state, with its tendency to insist that migrants should integrate within a national culture, may not always be as tolerant as one would wish towards immigrants who maintain strong ties to their countries (and cultures) of

origin. This is particularly the case if that nation-state feels somehow threatened by the inevitable cultural "baggage" which strong links with the homeland bring with them. In the United States, for example, despite, its strong and vibrant tradition of welcoming and incorporating immigrants, expression of hostility towards the use of Spanish by Latino immigrants are not uncommon.

There are, of course, ways of resolving these conflicts and they are not specific to STEP-OUT migrants. Indeed, by whetting our appetite for further discussion on these matters, the authors confirm the importance and usefulness of their book that extends beyond the apparent scope of the title. Due to the breadth of the issues it raises, the revolutionary perspective it advocates and the clear and persuasive manner in which it is written, it is hard to think of any aspect of migration studies that would not be enriched by engaging with the arguments made in this volume. I highly recommend it.

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**~~Human Rights and the WTO:
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~~ISBN: 978-0-19-921520-1~~

~~Holger Hestermeyer~~
~~Oxford University Press~~
~~(2007)~~

~~When people get serious about
social justice, the "moderates"
step in to show how to use
existing rules to advance the
social aims. This book is one of
those efforts and it succeeds
admirably. It will repay a good
read by lawyers, diplomats,
human rights advocates, and
students of international affairs
by illuminating the ways one
might solve conflicts between
legal regimes. In closely
reasoned argument, Hestermeyer
shows how access to medicine is
a human right as is the
individual right to the fruits of
ones ideas and inventions. He
then shows how current rules
under the GATT, WTO dispute
settlement rules, and even TRIPs
can be used directly or with the
assistance of customary and
general principles of inter-
national law to advance the right
to medicine. He thinks that one
does not need to make overly
broad claims for human rights to~~