**Ozgur Project Proposal:** What is the most cost effective way to help rebuild conflict states?

Countries that have experienced conflicts or are currently embroiled in prolonged conflicts face a plethora of problems varying from the loss of infrastructure, to contracting GDP, high levels of inflation and a rise in poverty and crime. These problems induce citizens to leave the country to get to a safe country resulting in an increase in both refugees and migrant flows. Countries such as Afghanistan. Iraq and Syria were already plagued with political, social, economic inequalities which have now become even worse. Such rampant inequality leaves these states vulnerable to further conflict in the future and continuous conflict in the present. Any solution that helps the rebuilding of the state needs to involve enacting policies that tackle these economic problems.

The current refugee crisis is a huge humanitarian crisis which is a direct result of ongoing and past conflict in states, if we want to stem this flow we need to help rebuild their home nations, that way if they choose to go back they have ample opportunities available to them. Similarly there are a lot of economic migrants from conflict states and ensuring economic opportunities in their home states will ensure that they do not migrate. The refugees problem is globally relevant as well since a lot of countries are closing down borders leaving these people stranded at check points and with little shelter or hope.

An important reason for rebuilding is that most terrorist factions take rise and cement their positions in areas where there institutions such as the police and court are weak, and the country is generally experiencing extreme poverty. By rebuilding nations we can help remove these countries from the list of breeding grounds that are available to terrorists saving us money in the future that would be have been allocated to fight any terrorists that could have been potentially recruited from here.

According to Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson the institutions within a country are the main factor in ensuring the prosperity of a country and preventing its failure. Also if we have stable, robust and trustworthy institutions within the country it will help counteract the growing inequalities that I have mentioned above, thus decreasing the probability of future conflicts. This is since if there are just courts and police institutions then people will trust the state and its decisions. Similarly if financial institutions are trusted then investment is more forthcoming. So it seems the set up and running of robust and transparent institutions is a necessary and logical course of action to help rebuild states.

The setup of such institutions is no easy task, it has 3 main hurdles. The first is you need qualified professionals and experts who will run such institutions. It is tougher to achieve this when the country’s infrastructure is in shambles and most of your citizens especially the qualified ones migrate to other more developed countries resulting in what is called a brain drain of the country. This is further worsened as developed countries selectively choose only qualified refugees and send the rest back (cite article). This results in the “brain drain” of the conflict country. The second hurdle is that the government needs to be dedicated to the upheaval of the country. If it isn’t then there is little you can do to work your way around this. Foreign intervention is not looked upon kindly especially if the state has geopolitical significance such as in the case of the Syria, so what a country needs is to initially start with the setup of institutions that are not contentious and one that any government will be willing to support it. The last hurdle is a financial one, setting up good quality institutions that are not susceptible to corruption and bribery will require highly paid individuals, if infrastructure is in shambles then you will need to rebuild as well resulting in a hefty bill. Now these nations due to their conflictual state have little left over finances to utilize hence they either require loans or outright donations by foreign nations. With donations there are two further issues the first being to convince nations to donate and ensuring the money actually goes to its intended target and is not eaten up by corrupt politicians and the bureaucracy. This is since theft of aid is especially likely when aid is given directly to the government.

Rebuilding nations is neither an easy task nor a cheap one. But there are a few basic ideas we can work on to set foundations on which a nation can be built which are its institutions. I believe the creation of “Super Universities” can solve these problems. Super Universities are large educational complexes of higher education complete with all the required departments and facilities of any state of the art university, they must also contain hospitals. They are different from other universities due to their end goal as well as how they will be run.

**Execution plan**

Super universities can be both an effective and a relatively cheap alternative through which countries can in a collaborative manner help rebuild conflict states. Each able country will be asked to champion the support of a super university in these conflict states. If even 30 nations agree to this what we will affectively have is 10 super universities in each of these 3 nations. If my project is approved I plan on researching to figure out how countries will fund such projects and showcase why they will be willing to fund them as well.

Super universities will essentially be set up in the form of a sister university of a singular or a group of the top few universities of a country. For example from Germany the universities; Technische Universitaet Muenchen (TUM), Ruprecht-Karls-Universitaet Heidelberg, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München could partner up to set a sister university in Baghdad using an amalgamated model of teaching that these universities already use. These universities will help set up a university in the conflict zone and help provide professors and other teaching staff while the country (donating country) it will help them financially. I will be utilizing the Ozgur project opportunity to show case other cases where such universities have been set up with a similar platform to show case the feasibility of my idea.

They will be equipped with all the necessary departments such as law, engineering, medicine, economics, business and the list goes on. Rather than directly invest in the country what this ensures is that money is not lost to corruption as the designated funds are directly managed by the donating country. I plan on using previous published data with regards to calculate and showcase the differences in aid money lost to corrupt governments versus direct investment in such educational institutions. These universities will be more like gigantic complexes with huge medical facilities and research centers which is a necessity for their survival as I will explain later. Universities such as MIT have revenues and costs peaking a billion dollars, owing to the research they conduct and their links to the corporate world What we need to do is create a nexus to ensure that the creative research that is being conducted at these universities finds its way to the industry in this conflict states. I intend on analyzing the financial statements of multiple universities to better gauge the required costs and profits on any potential super university that is set up.

These countries are already disadvantaged in the competitive sense and will have trouble to get back to the global trading stage effectively without racking up fiscal deficit and negative terms of trades, by utilizing super universities that are specifically set up to ensure high quality research and the utilization of such research for competitive edge will ensure a quick return of conflict states to the international market and help uplift their economy. If approved I intend to use this opportunity to crunch data personally as well as check through existing research to prove that there is a direct positive correlation between higher growth rates of GDP and higher education within the country. The faster their economies improve the sooner there will be a decrease in economic refugees. This will in the long term ensure less burden on the go to countries for refugees. Super universities also play another long term goal, they will be set up in such a manner that they provide both masters and PHD options and set up teaching workshops so that way as students pass through undergraduate to graduate studies they can eventually replace their professors so that way in about 10-15 years we can replace the faculty from professors of the sister university from foreign professors to a majority of professors from the home country. So what you have slowly done is ensure that citizens of conflict states are now responsible for themselves once again, then as the university earns money through business ventures and as the economy improves the university can be funded by both its own ventures and greater conflict state government funding. So it will lead to a point where the original donating country or countries no longer need to provide either the workforce or even the finances for the super university while we have an effective complex that ensures a huge hospital for the citizens and 1000s of qualified and dedicated professionals in other fields. These are the people then who will join other institutions within the country. This process can be used to set up further universities then if the donating country wishes and the process can restart.

I hope to showcase in my research that the setup of super universities is the most effective method of altruism that make citizens of these countries self-sufficient with the least amount of effort on the part of donating countries. I would like to specifically analyze the direct effects of higher education on GDP, the costs and profits of universities, the source of funds, case studies on existing collaborative university set ups and ultimately the feasibility of setting up super universities. I will be reading up on the history of the states that I plan on focusing on such as Syria, Iraq, Colombia and Kosovo. I am keeping a wide range of states that had conflicts from religious extremism to drug and Marxist ideology conflicts or simply ethnic violence. I will also be using certain books for help in this regard namely “Why nations fail” by Daren Acemoglu and also “Dictator’s handbook.” I plan on contacting academics as well as state officials of these countries and asking them their opinion on the idea of super universities and whether they would be open to such institutions.

I am in contact currently with citizens of the Republic of Kosovo and I plan on visiting the country to meet the locals and conduct interviews and preferably meet some academics as well to discuss these ideas with them. Kosovo is a good place to visit as it is safer than Iraq and Syria, cheaper to visit compared to Colombia, has had conflicts in the past and is a relatively new country so its institutions are not that strong hence it’s a good country to focus on with specific regard to my research question, “what is the most cost effective way to help rebuild conflict states?”