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# Communicate Beyond Words: Investigating the Polarized Discourses of Conflict Entrepreneurs to Secure Peace and Stability in Ethiopian Universities

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#### ABSTRACT

The prominent objective of this paper is to investigate polarized discourses of conflict Entrepreneurs so as to secure peace and stability in the Ethiopian universities. Conflict Entrepreneurs are those who have been fabricating hate speeches, disinformation, hate crimes, polarized ethnocentric and religious discourses to create crisis. As a result, dozens of universities are at different levels of chaos and crisis starting from 2015 than ever before in its severity and calamity. The sources of the problem seemed to be the slanted discourses of conflict Entrepreneurs. To unpack the problem, data were collected in natural settings of universities and other source by using chain or snowballing sampling techniques focusing on crisis and its causes. Key informant interviews, document analysis and reports of all universities at different meetings of universities were employed to gather data. The analysis was done on emerging and existing polarized discourses of conflict Entrepreneurs. The overall findings revealed that because of the polarized and pretext discourses of conflict Entrepreneurs, there were crisis on human and non-human elements in dozens of Ethiopian universities. Therefore, pragmatic social vaccines (trainings and education), should be designed and implemented in all universities to secure peace and stability since the sources of the problem and the proposed solutions are almost similar.

Key words: Communication beyond words, conflict Entrepreneurs, hate speeches, polarized discourses, social vaccine

### INTRODUCTION

Existing and emerging discourses have revealed that fueled by conflict entrepreneurs, war and violent conflict pose one of the most difficult impediments challenges and to human development. Of the 20 poorest countries in the world including Ethiopia, most have continually experienced crisis and violent conflict. According to the Human Development Report (HDR 2002), in the 1990s more than 53 internal conflicts resulted in an estimated 3.6 million deaths, the majority of whom were civilians such as innocent farmers and university students. Frequently these wars accompany political, economic, and social transition, natural disasters, and profound pressures arising from globalization, which tends to make them intractable and protracted.

Crisis, conflict and different form of war today is mostly internal, chronic, extending over long periods of time, often based on identity politics, religion and benefiting from globalized forms of

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financing, which include among others: the drug trade, arms trade, the exploitation of natural resources and financial remittances. Preventing the death and suffering of millions from violent conflict and building a sustainable peace is the most urgent challenge for human development today (UNDP, 2004).

According to dozens of scholars (Coombs, 2009b and Topper, B., & Lagadec, 2013) and the investigation of these researchers, crisis and survival struggles are the everlasting human fates. A crisis is an event that threatens the organization's tangible resources, such as people and property, or intangible resources, such as credibility and reputation. It is an unpredictable and/or unexpected event, which creates uncertainty impact on organization. Traditionally, a crisis has been perceived to have only negative outcomes but recently it has been seen rather as a turning point that presents the organization with both threats and opportunities.

Virtually every crisis contains within itself the seeds of success as well as the roots of failure. Finding, cultivating and harvesting the potential

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success is the essence of crisis management. The core of crisis mismanagement is to make a bad situation worse. This is because managing crisis is a time memorial prime responsibility for human survival. To overcome emerging and existing crises for survival, human spices have gone through three long eras until now. The first strategy to manage crisis appeared to be muscular era. In this era the most essential weapon to survive or to live and make its offspring live was being muscular and became physically strong. This is because the one who was very strong could run, hunt and fight with wild animals to get food and other survival or basic human needs.

through practical experiences Then. with negligible differences, human spices have developed primitive weapons like bows and arrows, spear and knives from the generous gifts of nature such as stones, trees and animal products. This era was believed to be weapon era. The one who produced better weapon and fought well won over the weakest one and made them to the extent slave. The third era is Information Communication Era This era has brought round digital transformation and intelligence. It appeared to be characterized by the rapid shift from traditional industry that the Industrial Revolution brought through industrialization to an economy based on information technology. In this 21st century, everything is at the tip of our figures.

Nonetheless, existing and emerging surveyed evidences have stated that although there are many religious institutes, churches, mosques and educational institutions which are supposed to teach the youth, the present generation does not seem to be divorced from the previous two long aged practices most importantly here in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. This is because 'Conflict Entrepreneurs' came into sight blinded with polarized and slanted discourses by using the emerging modern technologies than ever before. Thus, it is hoped that universities and other organizations while preparing manuals to overcome crisis and conflicts would use the result of the study.

Hence, this paper is expected to investigate polarized discourses of conflict Entrepreneurs so as to give tailored trainings towards securing peace and stability in the universities. Then suggest possible way outs to solve the detected problems in tune with the following leading questions:

- 1. Why are dozens of Ethiopian Universities in crisis mainly for the last four years?
- 2. Who are conflict entrepreneurs? Who are their targets?
- 3. How do conflict entrepreneurs disseminate their hate discourses?

To what extent do universities employ key elements of conflict resolutions to manage the polarized discourses conflict entrepreneurs?

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Language is a necessary pre-condition for our thought and action. This means that the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them are provided by the language that they use (Morgan, 2010). Morgan (2010:120) further added, "no intervention will be successful if it does not take into account the context in which language problem is embedded". As to this scholar, the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. In full agreement with Morgan (2010), Cook underscores, "language is at the heart of human life, without it; many of our most important activities are inconceivable" (Cook, 2003:5). Gee (2011) also proclaimed that language is a guide to social realities and human life since it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes.

Gee, (2011) further emphasized that without language, human beings could not live in the objective world alone or alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood. In full agreement with the above scholars, as to Fairclough (2003), one can see social life as interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, cultural, and so on).

To demystify and unmask intricate social life, discourse analyzes has been employed. This is because discourse analysis is the study of social life, and offers a method of investigating meaning in interactions between and across people and systems. Moreover, discursive Practices are produced (created) and consumed (received and interpreted). Discursive practices, through which texts are produced (created) and consumed (received and interpreted), are viewed as an important form of social practice which contributes to the construction of the social world including social identities and social relations. It is partly through discursive practices in everyday life (processes of text production and consumption) that social and cultural reproduction and change take place.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Discourses of Conflict Entrepreneurs**

According to many scholars (Akinnawonu 2006 and Garland 2009, to mention some) lots of conflicts active in the world now there are politicians and individuals present that seek to increase their own power and wealth through participation in conflict by violent means. It is interesting to note that in many countries this can be a (or virtually the only) opportunity for an individual to make a career in terms of power and finance. Conflicts can offer ways of gaining status, influence and money. In other words: conflict as a career. Other avenues available to resolving the conflict peacefully, might be taken but do not offer a future with them at the centre of power, in wealth or in any positions of control. This is why the integration of 'rebel', 'irregular' forces are so important in negotiations for peace deals.

In full agreement with Grant (2008), Support (2006) described that conflict entrepreneurs are actors who use a specific situation or condition for the purpose of establishing a conflict in order to gain something through the exploitation of new power relationships. The gain can be personal (economic wealth, political power) or it can be seen by the conflict entrepreneur to benefit a collective with which s/he identifies. Instigating a conflict can even be seen as a prerequisite for preserving and protecting those collective against (perceived or real) external threats. Whether the 'real' reason is personal or collective gains will hardly influence the way the cause is presented.

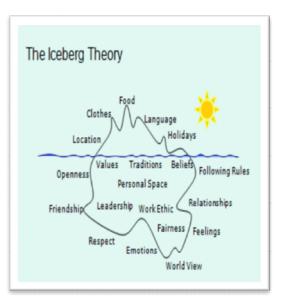
As to Turpin-petronin(2009), any conflict entrepreneur worthy of the label will mobilize 'his' or 'her' group for conflict by convincing the potential group members that the mobilization is for a collective good or in order to avoid the disastrous effect of the other group's mobilizing first. The conflict entrepreneur benefits not only by mobilizing strength against another group but also by gaining uncontested power within the group.

# Communication Beyond Words as Conflict Resolutions

Communication beyond words is not mere informative since information is not enough although it is important to provide information in the early phases of a behavior change intervention and to reinforce such knowledge periodically.

Communication beyond words is multi-layered! It lies on the meaning of culture beyond the words. It isn't easy to reach the deeper levels of culture and its meanings! In order to understand cultural differences better and make communication beyond words, view culture as an iceberg.

As can be seen in fig. 1, large sections of human behaviors are hidden and invisible, only a small part can be seen. The huge part of human behavior is covert behavior. The covert behavior is found in the unconscious part of our mind. The unconscious is again the source of our motivation whether they are simple desires such as food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist (Boeree 2009). Kosslyn and Rosenberg (2004:459) assert, "repressed thoughts, feelings and wishes are hidden from awareness." The largest part by far is





#### Fig. 1: Iceberg Theory of Culture and Hidden behaviors (Source: Kosslyn and Rosenberg (2004))

the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we cannot bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma (McVittie, and Mckinl6ay 2011). Just like that to bridge polarized discourses and demystify conflict entrepreneurs, communication beyond words essential. This is because the deeper meaning of the message is not revealed the surface, but shine through implicitly.

The researcher of this paper distilled from different sources (to mention some, Bonta, Bruce D.,1996 and Brigg, Morgan, 2007) and has suggested the following conflict resolution principles to solve polarized discourse of conflict entrepreneurs. Making conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or "being right" is the prominent principle of conflict management. This is to mean that maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than "winning" the argument, should always be our first priority (Andrew, W. and R.S. Ratner 2008). Hence, the following key elements of conflict resolution principles were used as conceptual framework while gathering data:

Key AxiomsConflict Resolution Principles to solve Polarized discourses1Education on Media EthicsEducation on media ethics should focus on the rights and freedom consumers and their role in creating and promoting peaceful socie2Encourage ConflictConflict sensitive reporting will help dispel the 'us' against 'their fallacy. Activists and Journalists should be taught conflict sensiti reporting skills. Multicultural awareness campaigns3Regulate Social mediawithout revoking the right to press freedom. Press freedom can 1 enhanced through education on media laws and ethics since man conflict nerrepreneurs use FB as free grazing land4Encourage Victims and witnesses to report hate speech related crimesHate speech remains largely invisible simply because many victim not know where to report the cases or even understand that they with the speech remains largely invisible simply because to many victim not know where to report the cases or even understand that they with speech related crimes5End impunity against hate crimes:establishing monitoring and evaluation units in newsrooms to mor hate speech trends, compiling reports and bringing these to the atte of key institutions and the civil society6Listen for what is felt as well as said.Recognize that all of us hear us when it's our turn to speak.7Recognize that all of us have biased fairnessRecognize that all of us have biased fairness perception using jointly hiring a mediator to avoid escalating tensions with threats and provocative move- to avoid escalating tensions with threats and provocative move- to avoid escalating tensions with threats and provocative move- to avoid escalating tensions with threats and provocative mov	s of ies. n' ve size ions be yy s do ure itor ntion s to ming so as t ty to
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	issue
10 Be willing to forgive. Resolving conflict is impossible if we're unwilling or unable to for	
Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can neve	
compensate for our losses and only adds to our injury by furthe	r
depleting and draining our lives.	
11 Know when to let If we can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two pe	
something go. to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, we can c	loose
to disengage and move on.	
12 Don't Avoid Conflict- moderate conflict speeds up work. you could ignore it, and let the	e
participants work it out among themselves.	
13 Choose a Neutral Location One of the first steps to diffuse any conflict is to change the environ	
People are heated and that anger is often tied to a place. It sounds	
but just removing the people from the room they're fighting in will	help
put the conflict in perspective.	
14Don't Intimidateyou are a leader, you're in a position of authority. Don't abuse it. It	
seem like the simple fix to coerce the correct course, but that is r	
thinking in the long-term. The team never learns anything from thi	
to fear you, which means they won't confide in you when someth	
starts going wrong, leaving you in the dark until the issue is possi	
beyond repair. So, take the time to work through your conflict resol	ution
in such a way that it doesn't pop up again the next day.	
15Act DecisivelyRemember, you want to put the time into conflict resolution to do it	
But once you have gone through that process, then it's time to act,	and
you should do so decisively.	
16 Communication beyond Communication beyond words means paying attention to both verba	
words nonverbal cues. This is because the most important information	
exchanged during conflicts and arguments is often communicate	
nonverbally. Use traditional materials and wisdoms to make conf	ict
resolutions.	

Key Elements of Conflict Resolution	Principles to Solve Polarized Discourses
<b>IXCY</b> Elements of Commet Resolution	I I IIICIPICS to Solve I Galizeu Discoulses

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed qualitative research approach because it helps in understanding issues from the affected individual perspectives and help to get to know the real need rather than the perceived needs or felt needs. Moreover, it plays a vital role in answering doubts and queries since it endeavors to reach multiple audiences via typical case samples, extreme cases, or outliers in order to unpack the real problems.

This study uses different samples and sampling techniques to recruit relevant participants and discourses (texts) in order to gather proper data and come up with valid results. Many students were wounded, looted, females were raped, and sadly enough at least sixteen (16) university students were killed in the university campuses and their vicinities starting from 2015 up to 2017. Available or comprehensive sampling techniques were employed since all of them were sampled.

Snow balling and extreme case sampling techniques were also used to fish genuine information from the victimized families, friends and other resourceful persons. Leaders from all ten universities from which at least one student found killed were used as typical case samples. These were university presidents, vice presidents, student

councils, instructors, administrative workers, higher government officials, families and colleagues of the victims who were sampled by purposive sampling techniques. Thirty (30) key informants, three from each university were sampled and interviewed by using extreme case sampling technique in conjunction with the above sampling techniques.

Moreover, discourses of activists, which are shared and propagated, by university students, instructors and administrative workers were gathered from Facebook walls and other chain sampling techniques. Three key government security figures and three professionals in Psychology, politics and law were interviewed to triangulate and to enrich the findings from by using expert sampling techniques.

As highlighted above, all the sources of data were selected by using different types of sampling techniques on the basis of the following three criteria. These are; (a) the availability of sufficient information (b) the possibility of getting a good mixture of population such as top leaders from the university, instructors, administrative workers, students, activists and key government agents from police and security (c) accessibility to collect the necessary data. Information may be available but may not be accessible due to security and other confidential matters. The polarized discourses of conflict entrepreneurs were analyzed within the framework proposed by van Dijk (2004). The dichotomous categorization of polarized discourses of 'negative otherrepresentation' and 'positive self-representation' (In-group vs. Out-group, US-THEM) has been adopted for the analysis of the data.

In this framework, conflict entrepreneurs use the dichotomies of polarized discourses. This categorization is very effective in implementing the fundamental strategy of 'self-positiverepresentation' and 'other negative-representation. Virdee (1995) stated that the former is an ideological function, which is applied to portray oneself as superior than the others; instead, the latter is to present the other as inferior or mediocre. Positive self-representation or in-group favoritism is a semantic macro- strategy used for the purpose of 'face keeping' or 'impression management' (van Dijk, 2004). Negative other-representation is another semantic macro-strategy regarding ingroups and out groups, that is, their division between 'good' and 'bad', superior and inferior, US and THEM. Polarized discourses are notably degrading, demeaning and denigrating discourses (Chakraborti, 2010).

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This part of the paper mainly dealt with investigating the polarized discourses of conflict entrepreneurs.

Although, commendable achievements are attained in managing the stated problems so far, the lived and emerging discourses on the ground in almost universities have revealed that conflict and crisis seem to be prevalent on the ground even today. This researcher felt that these gray areas do not seem to be given meticulous attention. Hence, the following analyses were given:

### Crisis and Polarized Discourses

Regularly emerging reports from university top leaders, professionals and experts in the area from typical case sampled universities have reiterated that universities were found in different levels of crisis and chaos. The findings revealed that dozens of conflict entrepreneurs were found:

- 1. Blind prejudices while overt prejudice is now much less prevalent than in decades past. Subtle prejudice which is indirect, covert in nature, or difficult to observe, and frequently goes undetected by both perpetrator and victim.
- 2. Defensive perpetrators that engage in hate crimes out of a belief they are protecting their communities. These are often triggered by a certain background event. Perpetrators believe society supports their actions but is too afraid

to act and thus they believe they have communal assent in their actions.

- Retaliatory perpetrators engaged in hate 3 crimes out of a desire for revenge. The attackers were blinded by distorted discourses posted on Facebook walls, books deliberately written in fictious manner and monument that instigate revenge which are proudly erected in different parts of Ethiopia. This can be in response to personal slights, other hate crimes. The avengers target members of a group whom they believe their ancestors, ethnic groups, religious groups or themselves have committed the crime, even if the victims had nothing to do with it by now. These kinds of hate crimes are a common occurrence after verbal or physical attacks occurred in one of the government universities in Ethiopia.
- 4. Mission offenders/perpetrators engage in hate crimes out of ethnic, religious and/ or ideological reasons. They consider themselves to be freedom fighters and crusaders, often for a religious or racial cause. They will often write complex explanations for their views and target symbolically important sites while trying to maximize damage. They believe that there is no other way to accomplish their goals, which they consider to be justification for excessive violence against innocents. Dozens of elites in and out of universities are members of different political parties and religious followers. They were some time devilish missions given by conflict entrepreneurs.

Hence, assuring peace and security remain the prominent challenges in the university landscapes.

### **Conflict Entrepreneurs**

Key informant professionals in the area during the interview sated that conflict entrepreneurs seemed to be power mongers, politicians, and activists who have been working day and night to boost their power in any means. Conflict entrepreneurs often mobilize individuals through three general tactics: appeals to ethnic, religious, and/or ideological solidarity; patronage; and positive or negative promises regarding security. They also aggravate minor good governance gaps to fuel their subtle agenda. This is because their daily bread to make a career in terms of power and finance heavily depends up on conflict. In other words, conflict as a career. Other avenues available to resolving the conflict peacefully, might be taken but do not offer a future with them at the centre of power, in wealth or in any positions of control. They have been consciously crafting aggressive quarrel among innocent university students. They meticulous fuel violence as a path for attaining economic and political power.

Conflict entrepreneurs often have created chaos, havoc and crisis that lead to displacement. They are heavily Ethnocentric who falsely distort what is meaningful and functional to other peoples through their own tinted glasses. They display lack of regard for other people and assume that others are inferior. They interrupt others frequently, disregards what others say and has no qualms about literally taking over someone else's space. They attack, verbally or physically, and think that all problems are someone else's fault and also believes that everyone else is obligated to provide whatever he or she wants.

They use intimidation and humiliation to get what they want, and they feel their behavior is justified. They smile at you when he or she is actually angry with you. They appear calm and cooperative but subtly disrupt, spread rumors and sabotages, etc against other groups to quietly get revenge. They communicate superficially avoiding the objects of their anger while releasing anger indirectly, such as through backhanded compliments or talking negatively about others behind their backs. The devilish targets of conflict entrepreneurs are innocent students who were murdered savagely. Many students were wounded, looted, females were raped, and nearly 20 university students were killed starting from 2015 until now. This is because conflict entrepreneurs have been meticulously crafting fake news, hate speeches, slanted discourses and distorted historical discourses on books, Facebook walls and different audio media.

They have also produced disinformation, i.e. false information spread deliberately to deceive others when known misinformation is purposefully and intentionally disseminated. It appears apparent that hate and dangerous speech is a serious and growing problem in Ethiopia, both online and offline.

In a nutshell, findings itemized that dozens of conflict entrepreneurs are not empathic toward people from other ethnic and religious groups since they lack to accurately perceive differences and similarities between theirs and others. Many of the respondents mentioned that university students were found that they cannot even joke in a form of mild and friendly insults with other ethnic & religious groups. If they do, their discourses have been hijacked by conflict Entrepreneurs. Most importantly if the university leaders are reckless in addressing even minor conflicts and crisis quickly and handled in an unhealthy manner that caused irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups, conflict entrepreneurs are very swift to aggravate these minor gaps of the University and escalate to universities through different modern all communication.

# Communication Beyond Words for Conflict Resolutions

No sampled universities had conflict resolutions strategies supported by conflict management guideline in order to manage the polarized discourses of conflict entrepreneurs. The key elements of conflict resolution and communication beyond words were not employed by the universities. Strong student council and peace and stability forum should have been organized in the university. Student leaders should have practiced conflict resolution principles by using both traditional and modern ways of conflict resolution methods in the form of extracurricular activities in the university. Leaders at different levels in the universities have failed to address conflicts beyond words. Communication beyond words means paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues. This is because the most important information exchanged during conflicts and arguments is communicated nonverbally.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents a brief conclusion of the findings vis-à-vis the research questions and makes some recommendation in the light of the findings.

#### Conclusions

Using these distilled lenses, all of the research questions were analyzed and the following conclusions were fished:

- Lack of communication beyond words though 1 important information exchanged during conflicts often and arguments is nonverbally. Nonverbal communicated communication is conveyed by emotionally driven facial expressions, posture, gesture, pace, tone and intensity of voice. The most important communication is wordless. When people are upset, the words they use rarely convey the issues and needs at the heart of the problem. Sadly enough, dozens of people tend to be unaware of their biases, placing stereotype and cultural assumptions on others.
- 2. Our country Ethiopia in general and universities in particular has no a comprehensive policy and/ or guideline which focuses on hate speeches, fake news, media ethics, conflict resolution, social media, hate crimes and the like.
- 3. All universities have no pragmatic conflict resolution and crisis management guidelines, which embraces the key elements of effective conflict resolutions and crisis management principles to demystify polarized discourses and conflict entrepreneurs.

- 4. Lack of Education on Media Ethics, Social media regulation and other surgical trainings in order to manage the polarized discourses of conflict entrepreneurs is another finding of this study.
- 5. The overall findings revealed that the largest waves of hate speeches, hate crimes, fake news and disinformation have been taken place for the last many years in general and the previous four years in particular. Violence, threats of violence and killings were common. Hundreds of lives were lost in and out of university campus due to large bodies of Face bookers who are working day and night on polarized discourses, hate speeches, fake news and fabricated lies blanketed with fake names. Surprisingly, fake news and distorted messages are traveling faster and farther on social media than the truth. As a result, students were stoned to death in their compound, some persons out of the university campuses were burnt alive and hanged their corpse. Burning of churches and mosques were also occurred.

#### Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, it is possible to suggest the following possible recommendations:

- 1. To curb crisis, it is high time that government of the country should develop alternative guidelines in conjunction with the universities should give social vaccine trainings for all university communities (leaders, instructors and students) focusing on conflict resolution and unity-in-diversity.
- The pragmatic reality on the ground revealed 2. that we live in a world where corporate reputations are fragile and where crises seem to be occurring more and more. Communication beyond words appeared to be essential. Hence, the role of pragmatic communicator in this transient university environment is critical. Furthermore, the communication planner who might foresee and prepare for such eventualities is a significant player in our interconnected and changing world, a comprehensive approach to managing situations that may turn into crises and handling crises once they occur. Their proposition is that it is impossible to live without risk and, therefore, it is important that universities are in constant dialogue with all the stakeholders with whom they operate. This means that communication in the university landscapes must be open, regularly evaluated
- 3. Conflict arises from differences, both large and small. It occurs whenever people disagree

over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences appear trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal need is often at the core of the problem. These needs can be a need to feel safe and secure, a need to feel respected and valued, or a need for greater closeness and intimacy. Everyone needs to feel understood, nurtured, and supported, but the ways in which these needs are met vary Differing needs widely. for feeling comfortable and safe create some of the most severe challenges in our personal and professional relationships.

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