

# Repatriates in the Kazakhstan: The Problems of Migration and Adaptation to the Historic Homeland

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**Abstract**—The article is devoted to Kazakh repatriates and their migration to Kazakhstan as historical homeland, and also addresses the problem of migrants' adaptation in the republic, particularly in Almaty oblast (region). The authors used up-to-date statistics and materials of the Department of Migration Committee to analyze the newcomers' number and features of the repatriate's location in this oblast. Having studied this region they were able to identify the main reasons why Kazakh Diaspora in Central Asia, Iran, Avganistana and Turkey is eager to come back to their historic homeland along with repatriates adaptation to the republic.

**Keywords**—Kazakh diaspora, repatriates, migration, adaptation, Central Asia, Iran, Avganistan, Migration Committee.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SINCE Kazakhstan achieved its independence in 1991 the republic president N.A. Nazarbayev repeatedly made in some public speeches announcements which are possible to describe as appeal to "far away brothers" to return back to our common homeland Kazakhstan. All "blood brothers" who have been scattered for long time over the world due to different and often tragic historical difficulties at the time [1] were called to unite as Kazakh nation on their state territory. The consequences of this policy had started in 1990-s are seen in mass inflow of the Kazakh Diaspora back to their native lands on par with the process of quick growth of the compatriots wishing to return from abroad.

When Kazakhstan celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence the number of returned Kazakhs from near and far abroad was estimated as about one million who settled in their "historic" homeland - the Republic of Kazakhstan. According to the data found out in the expert report of the Commission on Human Rights under the President of Kazakhstan on repatriates, refugees and stateless persons in Kazakhstan issued in June 2012: "From 1991 to October 1, 2011 221, 3 thousand families or 860, 4 thousand ethnic Kazakhs have returned to their historic homeland. There are 127, 7 thousand families were resettled on migration quotas, and 94, 2 thousands independently without quotas" [2, p. 40].

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One of the key aspects of the problem with new settlers in Kazakhstan is ineffectiveness of state policy concerning their resettlement. First, official bodies are not able to provide exact data on number of Kazakh migrants. During the work of the research team organized within the framework of state sponsored project 1147 "Kazakh Diaspora and repatriation: study of ethnocultural heritage and adaptation to the historic homeland" to the South regions, Kazakhs had been migrated from Shyrshyk city, Angren, Akhangaran and Kybrai regions, "Turkistan" settlement, Tashkent oblast of Uzbekistan were estimated as about 300-400 families [3].

Today the returned compatriots represent 10 % out of the Kazakhstan population. This figure, of course, has a positive effect to the difficult demographic situation in the republic meanwhile due to compatriots' abilities to accommodate to other state culture they will be able to inculcate to Kazakhstan present day environment. The newcomers because they had been living abroad for long time out of their historic homeland, during tens, hundred years were passing from generation to generation their national culture inheritance being able not only to preserve it but also to renew some traditions and arts forgotten by our compatriots.

This is the one of the main reasons to study how the national traditions were keeping and changed by Kazakhs living far from the republic's territory and thus how the processes of adaptation to the local environment is affecting and transforming political, social and economic development of the country. Thus, by studying issues of national identity formation and the problems of implementation into the modern Kazakh society the cultural heritage of the Kazakh diaspora living in the other states, we would be able to come to key cornerstone national idea to be a driving engine to ensure the stable integrity of the Kazakh nation.

Since independence the government issued and implemented number of acts to assist to the compatriots who had escaped to abroad at the time due to tragic or difficult historical circumstances and returned home today. The government is solving problems related to migration, resettlement, and adaptation to the new environment, but in spite of the republic and local administration considerable efforts there are still many questions and problems appeared in the course of adaptation. Therefore, studying the characteristics of migration settlement, the demand of compatriots socio-cultural and spiritual life, we might grasp

some important moments and key issues to construct long lasting and effectively working national policy to strengthen national unity. Also, it would help to determine the contribution of compatriots into the socio-cultural, intellectual development of the country.

## II. SCHOLARSHIP ON MIGRANTS ISSUES

The main problem researchers are facing in context of above said is lack and non-academic character of the papers devoted to the spiritual needs of returnees, the problem of their adaptation to the terrain since independence, though these problems have been actively raised by republic mass media along with some scientific papers and dissertations.

One of them is the work published by a group of experts in 2005 "Kazakhskaya diaspora: nastoyasheye i budusheye" ("Kazakh Diaspora: Present and Future"), which describes the reasons for Mongolian Kazakhs migration to Kazakhstan: "Labor migration from Mongolia began the process of mass displacement, return to the homeland" [4 p. 78].

The main factor of Mongolian Kazakhs repatriation is the strong desire to keep national identity and traditional culture – the dream evidently easier to realize in their home country, provision of better the future for the younger generation, that is, education and development of the native language, etc.

E.Yu. Sadovskaya, one of the most respected author in field, describes in her work the resettlement of the Kazakh Diaspora from Mongolia since April 1991, "to show a concrete example how difficult the process of repatriation and integration was" [5 p. 105-109.] to the first Kazakhs repatriated from Mongolia. Among newcomers there were those who could not stand the difficulties of the early years of independence and preferred to come back. These problems have not received enough attention from the side of experts and researchers. One of the rare examples when problems and difficulties related to the resettlement and adaptation Kazakhs returned from Mongolia were studied and analyzed is the work of the historian and ethnographer Zardyhan Kinayatuly [6]. The author focused on troubles repatriates faced upon their arrival and what finally forced them went back disappointed. "...Mongolian Kazakhs especially are not able to use a historical chance to live and work in the land of their ancestors up to the end of the 90-s", which made an appeal to improve the demographic situation and to increase the birth rate in the republic a pure rhetoric. Judging the outcomes of the initial stage in the migration phenomenon none of the official pragmatic steps were based on the results of the historical, sociological, demographic, and statistical scientific review [6].

G. Mendikulova's works are valuable for better understanding theoretical and methodological aspects of Kazakh Diaspora research problems, the reasons of Kazakhs migration abroad, explanation of numerous historical reasons why they had moved into neighboring countries before. "The sovereignty and ideological freedom in Kazakh nation life started the process of spontaneous Kazakh people repatriation back to historical homeland", concludes G.M. Mendikulova [7, p.170.]. In other paper the author emphasizes that "the

repatriation of ethnic Kazakhs is divided into two stages: from 1992 to 1997, before the Migration Act was adopted in 1997, and since 1997 to present, when repatriates can move to Kazakhstan on a quota, by which for them there were created necessary conditions for living, working and studying", concludes the author [8].

Also, in the next research she notes: "... repatriation of Kazakhs to Kazakhstan from around the world has its own characteristics, challenges and perspectives that need to be deeply researched. Each country among the donor countries for Kazakh people repatriation, is unique in context of its historical development, which imposes a particular mark on immigrants. In addition, the repatriation needs to define typologies of returnees, the reasons to return back, adaptation and impact of returned migrants on the life of the Kazakh society" [9].

The reasons of the returning of Kazakh Diaspora from China to their historic homeland received academic and careful explanation in the articles of K.L. Syroyezhkin. By his opinion: "... ethnocentric gain element in policy on par with the newly appeared states of Central Asia ... will be accompanied by continuation to reduce the number of representatives of ethnic communities in the Chinese economy which has become quite serious challenges for Kazakh ethnic community living in People's Republic. In the future, this fact would not only lead to the ethnic conflict in Xinjiang outbreak, but also to the "push" of the Kazakh ethnic communities outside the region", assumes the article author [10].

The social-economic problems of the Kazakhs migration from Uzbekistan are shown in the work of Ye. Tukumov. The author having studied this problem made a conclusion that: "after the collapse of the Soviet Union to the environmental problems there were added socio-economic difficulties. The main causes of mass movement (except in Karakalpakstan, which is the most environmental questionable region) - Kazakh decline raises considerably in social status, followed by lack of career prospects, inequality in education, concerns for the children future, lack of necessary information and strong cultural ties with Kazakhstan" [11 p. 219.]. The doctoral dissertation and monograph of B.K. Kalshabaeva "Ortalyk Asia kazaktary (Tarikhi-etnografyalyk zertteu)" contains two paragraphs, which address the immigration of Kazakhs from Uzbekistan and fragmentary - from Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and the general problems of adaptation of immigrants in Kazakh society. The author emphasizes the causes of repatriation of Kazakhs from Uzbekistan were the difficult socio-economic situation of the country, a consequence of the administrative-territorial delimitation of Central Asia, the decline in the number of Kazakh schools and the introduction of the Latin alphabet, the high unemployment rate among the Kazakh youth and women. The second paragraph is devoted to the problems in adaptation of repatriates at the historic homeland [12, p. 327-328].

Using previously unpublished documents from the domestic and foreign archives concerning the problems of Kazakh diaspora and repatriates the migration issues met considerable attention in the works of the following researchers in history

field. Joint studies of K.I. Koblandin and G.M. Mendikulova on the history and current development of the Kazakhs in Uzbekistan contains a description of the history of migration from Kazakhstan to China, a role of returnees in the formation of the national idea was raised in the work of B.Zh. Atantaeva [13]. In this Kazakhstan's History study, based on the first collected, systematized and selected archival documents and statistics is comprehensively examined the history of the Kazakhs living in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the problems of their present conditions [14].

Scientific studies of M.H. Asylbekova and V.V. Kozin considered direction and course of migration after the Independence of Kazakhstan, their features have been analyzed of demographic situation in the country. In their joint publication "Population of Kazakhstan in terms of sovereignty" is given a new vision on the changes in the demographic situation of Independent Kazakhstan along with some merit figures migration returnees [15].

K.K. Suleimenova in second chapter "Influence of returnees on the dynamics ethnodemographic processes" of her work entitled "Agglomeration of Almaty: characteristics and dynamics of ethno-demographic and migration development (1991-2007)" provides analysis of the number of repatriates who have returned from abroad to Almaty region with the issues covered their resettlement issues [24]. K.K. Nurymbetova in the candidate dissertation "Problems and future of repatriation in Independent Kazakhstan: Historical Analysis (1991-2008)" insists that the course and characteristics of the process of repatriation in the 1990s in independent Kazakhstan, and features of the repatriation process in 2000-s is a result of more systematic work of the administration for the resettlement of returnees in the country [16].

The problem of repatriates also often shown in Kazakhstan periodical articles, such as: "Kazak eli", "Altyn besik", "Egemen Kazakstan", "Ana tili", "Turkistan", "Kazakstan Zaman", "Agaiyn" "Kazakhskaya civilizaciya", "Altyn Orda", "Zhas Turkistan", "Azamat", "Zhuragat", "Ak zhol".

Documents in the Central State Archive of the RK, the Archive of the President of Kazakhstan, State Archive of Almaty oblast, materials of statistical, migration agencies of the country, the first population census in 1989 and in independent Kazakhstan in 1999, and their results, the current statistical materials, data published in the press before account of the second national census in 2009, make it possible to assess the level of returnees socio-cultural development for today. The Grants projects announced by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2012-2014, gave an opportunity for professor B.K. Kalshabaeva won a research project on topic: "Kazakh Diaspora and repatriation: a study of ethnic and cultural heritage and their problems in adaptation to the homeland", and today studies the problems of repatriates in south-eastern region of Kazakhstan. For example, in 2012, members of the expedition headed by B.K. Kalshabaeva organized interviews with immigrants living in the village of Kaskelen region of Almaty oblast then

resulted in collected materials covering the history of their migration and problems of adaptation [1].

### III. PRESENT DAY MIGRATION: CHALLENGES AND TROUBLES

Although migration is one of the areas of history study, among the problems is not the form of a special study on the process of immigration and adaptation to a particular region. Therefore, the problems of returnees in the Republic of Kazakhstan, in particular the current problems adapting immigrants in the particular region need to be studied.

In 1991-2012, there were a lot of quota allocated mainly for repatriates wishing to return to their historical homeland, and particularly populous Almaty oblast. Almaty oblast has the second largest settlement of immigrants after South Kazakhstan oblast. The reason for settling repatriates in these areas are seen in its geographical location of these regions, climate, close location to megalopolis, and because this area is densely populated by Kazakhs. Therefore they try to settle closer to the Kazakhs.

Most immigrants of Almaty oblast are compatriots have returned back from China, Mongolia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran. For example, most of the returnees from Afghanistan and Iran settled in Kaskelen, Karasai region of Almaty oblast. In 1980-s, when Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, Kazakhs had previously lived in the country, first moved to Turkey and Iran, and later during the years of independence have returned home. After coming back were they first inhabited graze lands of Kyzylorda oblast, - mainly representatives of Junior Zhuz (Horde) who's ancestors had moved from Kyzylorda in 1926-1933, but did not get used to the new environment and moved closer to Almaty. The reasons of their inability to comply with Kyzylorda conditions are explained by following: most of them lived in the major cities of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and have been adapted to the business.

In previous chapter it was mentioned that in the early years of independence first started the relocation of Kazakhs from Mongolia. For example in 1991, when compatriots have moved to Almaty oblast, number of settled permanently in Zhambyl region reached 5116 families 18,035 people, 7,358 families, Enbekshikazakh region 21,052 people, Karasay region 9,727 families, 29,388 people, Ili region 4538 families, 12,168 people, Talgar region 3,076 families, 9714 people, Eskeldi region 2937 families, 11,245 people, Koksuy region 1,565 families, 5375 people, in Taldykorgan town 1396 families, 3715 people [17].

In general, after 1991, according to official figures of Migration Police Committee on the repatriation of Kazakhs (September 2011) to our country moved 210,225 returnee families, or 824,170 people [17].

Among the new settlers to Kazakhstan territory the highest rank occupy Kazakhs from Uzbekistan (60.1%), second place - the Kazakhs of Mongolia (13.3%), the third - the Kazakhs from China (10.3%), the fourth - Kazakhs from Turkmenistan (7.8%) and in the fifth - the Kazakhs from Russia (4.3%) [18].

In 1991-2011 to Almaty oblast moved 42,433 families, that is 133,826 people. If share by year, in 1991-2007, in Almaty oblast moved from abroad, 87,260 people, or 24,596 families,

of which 3581 families from Mongolia, or 14,625 people, from Turkey 393 families or 1,430 people. Kazakhs residing in Turkey served became a reason for the First President of the country Nursultan Nazarbayev business trip to Istanbul on September 28, 1991, and during the visit of the head of state in 1992 to Iran he met with Iranian Kazakhs and talks with the President of Islamic Republic of Iran laid the foundation for the return of Iranian Kazakhs to their historical homeland. The result of this agreement of the Head of State was the relocation of Iranian Kazakhs to their homeland starting the autumn, 1995. Total number of returnees from Iran composed 65 families or 345 people, 59 families or 226 people from Afghanistan, China's 7475 families or 26,103 people. [19]. The majority of our compatriots who returned from China, Mongolia moved by the quota for the migration program. The main reason for moving to returnees is: first, to preserve their traditional culture and national existence, and secondly, not performance in the residing country's socio-cultural needs, and unemployment.

In general, in the city of Almaty and Almaty oblast in 1991-2001 moved 1 family or 3 people from Denmark, 4 families or 18 people from the Arab States, 3 families, 14 people from Pakistan, 1 family, 4 people from Georgia, 376 families, 882 people from the Russian Federation, 4 families or 5 people from the Ukraine, 11,722 families or 40,621 people from Uzbekistan, 52 families or 186 people from Tajikistan, 488 families or 1,746 people from Turkmenistan, 367 families or 1,047 people from the Kyrgyz Republic, 1 family 1 person from Azerbaijan, from Belarus, Moldova, Latvia, Yugoslavia for one family and one man, and many of them settled in Almaty oblast. [3].

Also, according to the Office of Labor and Social Security of the population of Akim of Almaty oblast of Kazakhstan in the first half of 1997 in Almaty oblast moved 139 families numbering 384 persons. Of these, 224 employable, 72 employees. Returnees 24 families as a one-time assistance from the National Fund for decent and productive work has been allocated 632 thousand tenge. In April, it was bought 14 houses. Our compatriots were mostly settled in their native lands, Talgar, Kaskelen, Enbekshikazakh regions, their housing status and problems were informed [20].

In 2006, in Almaty oblast moved 3410 families from 15,470 people, in 2007, 14,890 repatriates, in 2008, 4598 families of 12,191 people. If we note the interstate share of resettled in 2006-2008, returned from Mongolia 670 families of 2839 people, from China 6369 family of 20,632 people, from Uzbekistan 5,712 families of 17,517 people, from Turkmenistan 142 families of 411 people, from Kyrgyzstan 257 families of 512 people, from Russia 193 families of 292 people, from Turkey 99 families of 315 people, from other countries 8 families of 13 people. [21]

In 2007, the number of repatriates who came to the region amounted to 14,890 people, in 2008, the number of arrived reached 12,191 people. And in 2007, in comparison with other countries from China were 2768 families of 8251 people [19].

According to the conclusion of the Migration Department of Almaty oblast in 2008, in Almaty oblast from the near and

far abroad in 1991-2008, moved 31,904 returnee families of 107,003 people. Of these, from Mongolia 3983 families, 16,193 people, from China 10,794 families 35,326 people, from Uzbekistan 14,973 families, 48,829 people, from Turkmenistan 550 families, 1930 people, from Kyrgyzstan 469 families, 1244 people, from Russia 481 families, 1,047 people, from Turkey 444 families, 1602 people, from Iran 65 families, 345 people, from Afghanistan 70 families, 260 people, from other countries 75 families, 227 people [19].

If we note the figures of returnees from foreign countries in 2011, 3695 families or 11098 people moved to Almaty oblast. There are 1437 families or 5699 people moved on migration quota financed of the Republic budget. Exactly 1937 families 5854 people moved from Uzbekistan, 1572 families 4199 people from Chinese People's Republic, from Mongolian Republic 121 families 438 people, 186 families from Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Tajikistan.

And since the beginning of 2012 1037 families 2361 people have moved to Almaty oblast and ordered to the status of repatriates, so all of them (2361 people) [20]. The study shows that ethnic Kazakhs want to move to Almaty region. However, one must admit that there are problems in the resettlement process of adaptation to their historic homeland.

The new law "On Migration" was approved on 22 July 2011 and entered into force on 16 August. This law basically made a huge change in this important social services. In particular, Article 5 of the Act spell out the rights and obligations of migrants. It is clearly described for immigrants arrived which documents should be collected how to settle in new environment how soon you can get citizenship of Kazakhstan how to legally get financial help from the government at various levels.

Currently, the World Association of the Kazakhs and the public reception office of "Nur Otan", other public organizations together discussed issues of repatriates to be addressed, proposed higher authorities, achieved positive results. As a result, several returnee families in 2011 were included in the immigration quota, and received confirmation of the Committee of the migration police, also were resolved on citizenship and credentials. But there are still enough problems on acquiring citizenship of Kazakhstan, on a favorable resettlement of returnees in the future, on employment. Problems of social security of returnees who came out of the migration quotas have been resolved in accordance with the Law "On Migration" and "On state social assistance," and pay the pensions, disability benefits and survivors. Many women and children among the returning immigrants is a contribution to the multiplication of the population.

Today Almaty Oblast is one of the first to support the program "Nurly Kosh" and approved the plan neighborhood. In this plan in Enbekshikazakh and Uighur regions, in Taldykorgan town is expected building villages with complete infrastructure equipment to stay more than 300 families [17].

All this work is done not only in order to accommodate returning compatriots but also for adapting repatriates to the

terrain, to simplify the process for the implementation of ethnic homeland.

The next issue requiring attention is the problem of repatriates adaptation. In general, "Adaptation" - addictive (Latin adapt), the adoption of social environment truthful of individual. Hence, our compatriots living in foreign countries, after coming back to their homeland have to adapt to the public social life, and this issue should be given sufficient attention [19].

Despite the low social status of returning compatriots, adapting high-level Kazakh nation will find its place in the community in a new place. The peculiarity of the Kazakh Diaspora in that with the nomadic Kazakhs civilization will be able to adapt to any terrain. Because the older and middle generation of Kazakh Diaspora are well aware of what zhuz and ru they belong wherever they are. Therefore, maintaining the concept of belonging to a certain group of posterity, Kazakhs remain subculture. Such as the Kazakhs came from Iran while not give daughters in marriage, but the girls take a wife of the local population of Kazakhs. Seeing a lot of difficulties in life, they get used to the economic situation of any country where they would not have lived. Many of them are engaged in business (collect skin, metal), and recovered their position. Therefore, the local Kazakhs despite differences in traditions have not opposition feelings to newcomers Kazakhs. People came from Iran usually occupy good position in society, mainly explained they follow religion, thus do not drink alcohol and are not addicted to smoking [1].

The second question in the adaptation process is the language issue. Language is the foundation of the relationship, so its importance can not be overestimate in society integration process. Knowledge of the state language by compatriots is the key indicator of integration into the labor market, social and cultural life of the country. All states pay particular attention to immigrants concerning their language skills in context of their adaptation. But each country has its own way to determine the amount of aid to study of language.

The first cause of migration Kazakhs in Kazakhstan is keeping the Kazakh language, culture, traditions of historical homeland, securing their children future. After returning repatriates face challenges of the Russian language along with Kazakh in everyday life. Russian language being the main language of communication, creates difficulties in the integration of repatriates in the labor market, social and cultural life of Kazakhstan. It is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that the lack of language affects the integration of immigrants into Kazakh society. It should be noted that currently there are three Kazakh alphabet in Kazakhstan, Russia and other CIS countries, Cyrillic, in Turkey and Western Europe, Latin, in China, Iran and Pakistan, the ancient Kazakh alphabet (derived from the Arabic alphabet). As a result, repatriates returning from China, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkey can not fully master the Kazakh language, so the face immediately after the arrival of the difficulties due to language. Sometimes the most necessary things, such as filling out documents for immigrant status becomes difficult. These difficulties are not prepared.

Although there are no state programs, some schools and colleges themselves to organize courses on the Kazakh and Russian [21].

Many repatriates have kept various aspects of the Kazakh culture and customs as one of the Kazakh Diaspora main characteristics. This situation I positive side affects cultural adaptation process and also prevents losing important part of our culture. In this regard it may be noted that the two situations exist in context settlement process- where you come from and plan to live in Kazakhstan. Consequently, the most favorable conditions for compatriots' life exist in South Kazakhstan, Zhambyl, Kyzylorda, Mangistau oblasts, because in these areas are well kept Kazakh culture and customs [22].

Socio-cultural adaptation of repatriates causes problems during integration in the northern and central regions. Another reason affecting the repatriates cultural adaptation is their lifestyle and way of religious feelings keeping. The main problem in the adaptation of repatriates to Kazakhstan is a problem of language skills, this is especially acute for Kazakhs from China, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey. Mainly due to the fact, they are not familiar with the Cyrillic alphabet, and then, do not speak Russian, and these circumstances cause some difficulties in obtaining documents, etc. Next cluster of problems concerns to the settling their occupational facilities. Summarizing, we can say, solving these problems we could speed up the process of Kazakh people adaptation to their homeland [23].

Recommendations should include opening language courses for immigrants, each settle on areas similar to previously occupied places; they also should be provided by opportunities to adapt to the profession, to expedite passports and assistance while obtaining citizenship, etc. During the years 1991-2011 in Almaty oblast moved 42,433 families, which are 133,826 Kazakhs immigrants [24].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

At present time Kazakh repatriates returning to their historic homeland affect the dynamics in growth population and improves the demographic situation of the country. The main dreams of returnees are to come back to their independent state, to become a citizen, to settle on their ancestors lands, and to provide possible contribution to the country's development. Immigration of ethnic Kazakhs from abroad will affect population growth in general, and to increase the proportion of older people in particular while migrating the Kazakh ethnic group comes into close relations with other nationalities, communicates with the society's spiritual values, and thus would lead to intermixture of some features different peoples populated our country. One of basic need to meet the challenges connected with repatriates' phenomenon is to avoid suspicion and misunderstanding being able at the same time to stress the unique cultural characteristics of our compatriots, who should be treated in particular careful way. In this concern, the assistance of public figures such as poets and composers, entrepreneurs to promote the process of revival of the forgotten qualities of the Kazakh people is hard to

overestimate along with the appeal to study the ancient values of Kazakhs.

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