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RICCI NILSOLITONS ASSOCIATED TO GRAPHS AND EDGE-COLOURING

Abstract. We provide a method to attach to every simple graph a 2-step nilpotent Ricci nilsoliton.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this note is to provide a new method to attach to every simple graph a 2-step nilpotent *Ricci nilsoliton*, namely a simply connected 2-step nilpotent Lie group (\mathcal{N}, g) endowed with a left-invariant metric g whose Ricci operator $Q : \mathfrak{n} \rightarrow \mathfrak{n}$ satisfies

$$(1) \quad Q = cI + D \text{ for some } c \in \mathbb{R} \text{ and } D \in \text{Der}(\mathfrak{n}),$$

where \mathfrak{n} is the Lie algebra of \mathcal{N} .

Lauret proved that there is at most one Ricci soliton metric on a nilpotent Lie group, up to isometry and scaling [8, Theorem 3.5]. Ricci nilsolitons are noteworthy in connection with the problem of classifying the *homogeneous Einstein* Riemannian manifolds; indeed, the metric nilpotent Lie algebras $(\mathfrak{n}, \langle, \rangle)$ satisfying (1) are exactly the nilradicals $\mathfrak{n} = [\mathfrak{s}, \mathfrak{s}]$ of the standard metric Einstein solvable Lie algebras \mathfrak{s} (endowed with the induced metric), see [8, Theorem 3.7]. For this reason, they are also called *Einstein nilradicals*. For more information and a list of recent relevant results concerning the classification of Einstein nilradicals see [9].

In [10] it is showed that the natural 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra \mathfrak{n}_G attached to a simple graph G admits a Ricci soliton metric if and only if the graph is *positive*, i.e., all the entries of the vector

$$(3I + \text{Adj}(L(G)))^{-1}(1, \dots, 1)$$

are positive; here $\text{Adj}(L(G))$ is the adjacency matrix of the line graph of G . For instance, regular graphs are positive. This criterion has been exploited in [11] in order to prove that for every pair (p, q) of integers with $q \geq 21$ and $q - 1 \leq p \leq \frac{1}{2}q^2 - \frac{5}{2}q + 9$, there do exist indecomposable 2-step nilpotent Lie algebras \mathfrak{n} of type (p, q) which are *not* Einstein nilradicals, where type (p, q) means that $\dim \mathfrak{n} = p + q$ and $\dim[\mathfrak{n}, \mathfrak{n}] = p$. We recall that \mathfrak{n}_G is defined in a very simple way as follows:

$$\mathfrak{n}_G = V_0 \oplus W_0,$$

where V_0 is the real vector space of dimension $n = \text{order of } G$ spanned by the vertices v_1, \dots, v_n of G and W_0 is the vector space of dimension $l = \text{size of } G$, spanned by the

¹This paper is dedicated to Professor Anna Maria Pastore on the occasion of her 70th birthday.

edges of G ; the Lie bracket $V_0 \times V_0 \rightarrow W_0$ is determined declaring

$$[v_i, v_j] := \{v_i, v_j\}$$

provided the vertices v_i and v_j are adjacent and $i < j$, and setting $[v_i, v_j] = 0$ whenever v_i and v_j are not adjacent (cf. [2]). It should be remarked that, in general, the standard basis of \mathfrak{n}_G made up by the vertices and the edges of a positive graph G is orthogonal but not orthonormal with respect to the Ricci soliton metric on the corresponding group \mathcal{N}_G (cf. [4]).

Our construction provides instead, for *every* graph G , a bigger 2-step nilpotent Einstein nilradical \mathfrak{n} containing \mathfrak{n}_G as a *totally geodesic* subalgebra (see Theorem 1). This Lie algebra is constructed as

$$(2) \quad \mathfrak{n} = V \oplus W_G, \quad V := V_0 \otimes \mathbb{R}^{2N},$$

where $N \in \mathbb{N}^* \cup \{\frac{1}{2}\}$ is uniquely determined by the degree sequence of the graph and W_G is a suitable subspace of $\mathfrak{so}(V)$, whose dimension s depends both on the degree sequence and the size of the graph. The Lie bracket $V \times V \rightarrow W_G$ of \mathfrak{n} is defined in the canonical way by

$$(3) \quad \langle [X, Y], J \rangle := \langle J(X), Y \rangle, \quad X, Y \in V, \quad J \in W_G,$$

where \langle, \rangle denotes both the inner product on V with respect to which the basis $\{v_i \otimes e_k\}$ is orthonormal and the inner product $\langle F, G \rangle = -\text{tr}(F \circ G)$ on $\mathfrak{so}(V)$.

In general, a 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra $\mathfrak{n} = V \oplus W$ constructed in this way starting from an Euclidean vector space (V, \langle, \rangle) of dimension q and a p -dimensional subspace $W \subset \mathfrak{so}(V)$, is usually called *standard of type* (p, q) . Hence, using this terminology, our \mathfrak{n} is of type $(s, 2Nn)$.

Requiring that $W = V^\perp$ and keeping on V and $\mathfrak{so}(V)$ the inner products \langle, \rangle , a standard 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra \mathfrak{n} is turned into a metric Lie algebra in a natural way, which we shall call a *standard metric* 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra. Certainly the left-invariant metric on the corresponding Lie group \mathcal{N} is a Ricci soliton provided its Ricci tensor is *optimal*, in the sense that the restrictions of Q to V and to W are both scalar operators. This happens if and only if W admits a basis $U = \{J_i\}$ such that

$$(4) \quad \sum J_i^2 = -\rho Id, \quad \langle J_i, J_j \rangle = \lambda \delta_j^i,$$

where λ and ρ are positive constants (cf. [3] or [6], where such a W is called a *uniform* subspace of $\mathfrak{so}(V)$). Indeed, it is known that $\langle QX, J \rangle = 0$ for every $X \in V$ and $J \in W$, and moreover

$$Q|_V = \frac{1}{2} \sum F_i^2, \quad Q|_W = \frac{1}{4} Id_W,$$

where $\{F_i\}$ is an arbitrary orthonormal basis of W (cf. e.g. [3, Prop. 3.1]).

In our case, we provide such a basis U_G of W_G parametrizing it by the edges of the graph G and a certain set of vertices; in building the corresponding operators J_i we make use of a fixed edge-colouring of the complete graph K_{2N} with $2N - 1$ colours.

We remark that the construction of \mathfrak{n} is performed in such a way that $\mathfrak{n} = \mathfrak{n}_G$ if and only if the graph G is regular.

In the last section we also propose a method for attaching to G a standard Einstein nilradical $\mathfrak{n}_{\mathbb{A}}$ having the same properties, constructed using a Cayley-Dickson algebra \mathbb{A} of dimension 2^M , where M is the smallest non negative integer such that $2^{M-1} \geq N$. The type of $\mathfrak{n}_{\mathbb{A}}$ is $(s, 2^M n)$.

2. Preliminary remarks

Given a simple graph G , we shall denote by $V(G)$ its vertex set and by $E(G)$ its edge set; recall that $V(G)$ is a finite set and $E(G)$ is a set of subsets of $V(G)$ each having cardinality 2.

We shall denote by K_n the *complete graph* with n vertices, namely $V(K_n) = \{1, \dots, n\}$ and $E(K_n)$ is the set of all subsets of $\{1, \dots, n\}$ having two elements.

We recall that an *edge colouring* of a graph G is a way of assigning a colour to each edge, in such a way that adjacent edges have different colours. In other words, an edge-colouring is a map

$$C_\mu : E(G) \rightarrow \{1, \dots, \mu\},$$

where μ is a positive integer, such that $C_\mu(\delta) \neq C_\mu(\delta')$ whenever $\delta \cap \delta' \neq \emptyset$. The *chromatic index* $X'(G)$ of G is the minimum integer μ for which such a colouring C_μ exists.

We shall use the following basic result: $X'(K_{2N}) = 2N - 1$ for every positive integer N . See e.g. [5]. Moreover, given a fixed colouring $C = C_{2N-1}$ of K_{2N} , for each colour $t \in \{1, \dots, 2N - 1\}$ we shall denote by C_t the set of ordered pairs $(k, k') \in \{1, \dots, 2N\}^2$ such that

$$C(\{k, k'\}) = t \text{ and } k < k'.$$

Then, by definition

$$(5) \quad t \neq t' \Rightarrow C_t \cap C_{t'} = \emptyset.$$

Moreover, it easily established that each colour class $C^{-1}(t)$ has cardinality N , so that

$$(6) \quad |C_t| = N \quad \text{for all } t \in \{1, \dots, 2N - 1\}.$$

3. Einstein nilradicals attached to graphs

Let $G = (V(G), E(G))$ be a simple graph of order $n := |V(G)|$ and size $l := |E(G)|$. We shall denote by d_v the degree of a vertex $v \in V(G)$ and by $\Delta(G)$ the maximum degree.

Let $V^o(G)$ the set of vertices having odd degree, and let $V'(G)$ be the set of vertices whose degree is different from $\Delta(G)$. We put

$$2m := |V^o(G)|, \quad r := |V'(G)|.$$

Denote by v_1, \dots, v_n the vertices of G . We shall label the vertices of $V^o(G)$ and those in $V'(G)$ as follows:

$$V^o(G) = \{v_{q_1}, \dots, v_{q_{2m}}\}, \quad V'(G) = \{v_{p_1}, \dots, v_{p_r}\}.$$

Now we define a pair (N, s) of numbers uniquely determined by the graph, determining the type of the standard metric 2-step nilpotent Einstein nilradical we are going to attach to G . First we set

$$h_i := \left[\frac{\Delta(G) - d_{v_{p_i}} + \varepsilon}{2} \right] \quad \text{for each } v_{p_i} \in V'(G),$$

where $[\]$ means the integer part, $\varepsilon \in \{0, 1\}$ and $\varepsilon = 1$ iff $\Delta(G)$ is odd.

Next let h be the greatest of the h_i and set $\bar{h} := \sum_{i=1}^r h_i$.

Hence, we define

$$s := \begin{cases} l + \bar{h} + m & \text{if } 0 < 2m < n \\ l + \bar{h} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and

$$N := \text{smallest number in } \mathbb{N}^* \cup \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \right\} \text{ such that } \begin{cases} 2N > h + 1 & \text{if } 0 < 2m < n \\ 2N > h & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

We remark that the graph is regular iff $h = 0$ and this is the only case where $N = \frac{1}{2}$.

As an example, consider the case of a non regular subcubic graph, i.e., $\Delta(G) = 3$; then we have $(N, s) = (1, l + r)$ in the case $V^o(G) = V(G)$ and $(N, s) = (2, l + m + r)$ otherwise.

Keeping this notation, we prove the following result.

THEOREM 1. *Let G be a simple graph of order n . Let \mathfrak{n}_G be the natural nilpotent Lie algebra attached to G . Then there exists a standard metric 2-step nilpotent Einstein nilradical \mathfrak{n} of type $(s, 2Nn)$ containing \mathfrak{n}_G as a totally geodesic subalgebra.*

Proof. We consider the vector space V_0 spanned by the vertices of G and $V := V_0 \otimes \mathbb{R}^{2N}$ with its standard basis $\{v_i \otimes e_k\}$. We shall order the elements of \mathfrak{B} according to

$$v_i \otimes e_k < v_j \otimes e_{k'} \text{ iff } i < j \text{ or } i = j \text{ and } k < k'$$

and we shall denote by \langle, \rangle the inner product on V with respect to which \mathfrak{B} is an orthonormal basis. Given a pair (u, w) of elements of \mathfrak{B} , with $u < w$, we shall denote by F_w^u the skew-symmetric endomorphism of V such that

$$u \mapsto w, \quad w \mapsto -u,$$

and whose kernel contains all other vectors in \mathfrak{B} different from u and w . Of course with respect to the standard inner product $\langle F, G \rangle := -\text{tr}(F \circ G)$, the F_w^u make up an orthogonal basis of $\mathfrak{so}(V)$; observe that $\|F_w^u\|^2 = 2$.

Now we construct an s -dimensional subspace W_G of $\mathfrak{so}(V)$ attached to the graph G . To this aim, we also fix an edge colouring C of the complete graph K_{2N} with $2N - 1$ colours. In the case $N = \frac{1}{2}$ we understand the empty colouring. Hence we build a subset $U_G \subset \mathfrak{so}(V)$ according to the following recipes A), B) and eventually C) in the case $0 < 2m < n$.

A) For each edge $\delta = \{v_p, v_q\}$, $p < q$ we consider the following operator J_δ :

$$J_\delta := \sum_{k=1}^{2N} F_{v_q \otimes e_k}^{v_p \otimes e_k}.$$

B) For each vertex $v = v_{p_i} \in V'(G)$ we define the following h_i operators $J_{v,t}$:

$$J_{v,t} := \sqrt{2} \sum_{(k,k') \in C_t} F_{v \otimes e_{k'}}^{v \otimes e_k} \quad t = 1, \dots, h_i.$$

C) In the case where $0 < 2m < n$, we also define, for each vertex $w = v_{q_j}$ in $V^o(G)$ with $j = 1, \dots, m$, an operator J_w by

$$J_w := \sum_{(k,k') \in C_{h+1}} F_{w \otimes e_{k'}}^{w \otimes e_k} + \sum_{(k,k') \in C_{h+1}} F_{w' \otimes e_{k'}}^{w' \otimes e_k}, \quad \text{where } w' := v_{q_{j+m}}.$$

Let U_G be the set consisting of the s operators of type J_δ , $J_{v,t}$ and J_w . We claim that U_G satisfies (4). Observe first that

$$\|J\|^2 = 4N \quad \text{for all } J \in U_G.$$

This is clear for the operators J_δ ; as regards the operators $J_{v,t}$ and the J_w , this follows from (6). Moreover, (5) also guarantees that the elements of U_G are pairwise orthogonal. Finally, observe that

$$\sum_{\delta \in E(G)} J_\delta^2 \equiv -\text{diag}(u, u, \dots, u), \quad u = (d_{v_1}, \dots, d_{v_n})$$

where \equiv means that the right-hand side square matrix of order $2Nn$ represents the operator on the left with respect to \mathfrak{B} . On the other hand, denoting by $\{\bar{e}_i\}$ the canonical basis of \mathbb{R}^n , for each $v = v_{p_i} \in V'(G)$ we have:

$$J_{v,t}^2 \equiv -\text{diag}(2\bar{e}_{p_i}, 2\bar{e}_{p_i}, \dots, 2\bar{e}_{p_i})$$

and finally for each of the vertices $w = v_{q_j}$, $j = 1, \dots, m$ of $V^o(G)$ we have

$$J_w^2 \equiv -\text{diag}(\bar{e}_{q_j} + \bar{e}_{q_{j+m}}, \bar{e}_{q_j} + \bar{e}_{q_{j+m}}, \dots, \bar{e}_{q_j} + \bar{e}_{q_{j+m}}).$$

According to the definition of the h_i , we conclude that

$$\sum_{J \in U_G} J^2 = -(\Delta(G) + \mathbf{v}) Id_V,$$

where $v \in \{0, 1\}$ and $v = 1$ iff $0 < 2m < n$ and $\Delta(G)$ is odd.

We have thus proved that the standard metric 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra $\mathfrak{n} = V \oplus W_G$, where $W_G = \text{span}(U_G)$ is an Einstein nilradical.

Concerning the last claim, denoting by V_1 the subspace of V spanned by $\{v_1 \otimes e_1, \dots, v_n \otimes e_1\}$ and by W_E the subspace of W_G spanned by the operators J_δ , $\delta \in E(G)$, then the linear isomorphism

$$\mathfrak{n}_G \rightarrow V_1 \oplus W_E$$

determined by

$$v_i \mapsto v_i \otimes e_1, \quad \delta \mapsto J_\delta$$

is a Lie algebra isomorphism between \mathfrak{n}_G and the Lie subalgebra $\mathfrak{n}_1 := V_1 \oplus W_E$ of \mathfrak{n} . Finally, it is readily verified that for every $X, Y \in \mathfrak{n}_1$ and $Z \in \mathfrak{n}_1^\perp$ we have

$$\langle [X, Z], Y \rangle = 0$$

yielding that \mathfrak{n}_1 is a totally geodesic subalgebra of \mathfrak{n} . \square

Observe that the construction performed in the proof actually works also for every integer $N' \geq N$, providing a standard Einstein nilradical of type $(s, 2N'n)$; our choice aims at providing a totally geodesic embedding $\mathcal{N}_G \hookrightarrow \mathcal{N}$ with minimum codimension.

4. A construction involving Cayley-Dickson algebras

In this section we provide an alternative description of an Einstein nilradical \mathfrak{n} attached to a graph, satisfying the conditions of Theorem 1. We recall that the Cayley-Dickson algebras constitute an infinite sequence of real algebras

$$\mathbb{A}_0 \subset \mathbb{A}_1 \subset \mathbb{A}_2 \subset \dots \subset \mathbb{A}_M \subset \dots$$

where $\mathbb{A}_0 = \mathbb{R}$, $\mathbb{A}_1 = \mathbb{C}$, $\mathbb{A}_2 = \mathbb{H}$ (quaternions), $\mathbb{A}_3 = \mathbb{O}$ (octonions), etc. Their construction can be described recursively as follows; set $\mathbb{A}_0 = \mathbb{R}$ and define $\mathbb{A}_{n+1} = \mathbb{A}_n \times \mathbb{A}_n$. Given $(a, b), (c, d)$ in \mathbb{A}_{n+1} , their product is defined by

$$(a, b)(c, d) = (ac - db^*, a^*d + cb),$$

where the *conjugate* of (a, b) is also defined recursively by $(a, b)^* := (a^*, -b)$. We have $\dim_{\mathbb{R}} \mathbb{A}_M = 2^M$; moreover, \mathbb{A}_M admits a standard basis

$$i_0 := 1, i_1, \dots, i_{2^M-1}$$

such that $i_k^* = -i_k$ for $k > 0$, and the corresponding multiplication table is

$$(7) \quad i_p i_q = \gamma(p, q) i_{p \oplus q},$$

where, for each $p, q \in \mathcal{G}_M := \{0, \dots, 2^M - 1\}$, $\gamma(p, q) = \pm 1$, and \oplus is the group operation in \mathcal{G}_M defined by $p \oplus q :=$ bit-wise *exclusive* OR of the binary representations of

p and q ; the group (\mathcal{G}_M, \oplus) is canonically isomorphic to \mathbb{Z}_2^M . In particular, $i_k^2 = -1$ for each $k \in \mathcal{G}_M$, $k > 0$. For more information and a detailed study of the function $\gamma: \mathcal{G}_M \times \mathcal{G}_M \rightarrow \{-1, 1\}$ we refer the reader to [1].

For each $x \in \mathbb{A}$, its *real part* is defined as usual by $Re(x) = x_0$, provided $x = \sum_{p \in \mathcal{G}_M} x_p i_p$. With respect to the inner product $\langle x, y \rangle = Re(x^*y)$, the algebra \mathbb{A}_M is known to satisfy the *adjoint properties*:

$$\langle xy, z \rangle = \langle y, x^*z \rangle, \quad \langle x, yz \rangle = \langle xz^*, y \rangle.$$

Moreover, we remark that using the multiplication of \mathbb{A} one can define an edge-colouring $C_{\mathbb{A}}$ of the complete graph K_{2^M} with vertex set $\{0, \dots, 2^M - 1\}$ as follows:

$$C_{\mathbb{A}}(\{k, k'\}) = t \quad \text{iff} \quad i_k i_{k'} = \pm i_t$$

for every $t \in \{1, \dots, 2^M - 1\}$ and $k, k' \in \{0, \dots, 2^M - 1\}$ with $k \neq k'$.

Consider now a graph G and the pair (N, s) defined above, and take the smallest non negative integer M such that $2^{M-1} \geq N$. In this case we consider a standard metric 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra

$$\mathfrak{n}_{\mathbb{A}} := \mathbb{A}^n \oplus W_G,$$

where $\mathbb{A} := \mathbb{A}_M$ and \mathbb{A}^n is considered as a $n2^M$ -dimensional Euclidean vector space in a natural way, declaring the natural basis $\{i_k \bar{e}_i\}$ to be orthonormal (here $\{\bar{e}_i\}$ is the canonical basis of \mathbb{R}^n and $i_k \bar{e}_i$ is the vector of \mathbb{A}^n whose only non null entry, indexed i , is equal to i_k).

In this case, the s operators making up the basis U_G of W_G will be all of type

$$(8) \quad \langle J_a(X), Y \rangle := Re({}^t X^* (aY))$$

where a is a $n \times n$ matrix with entries in \mathbb{A} .

The s matrices are defined as follows:

A) For each edge $\delta = \{v_p, v_q\}$, $p < q$, we consider the matrix $a_{\delta} := E_{pq} - E_{qp}$ whose entries indexed by (p, q) and (q, p) are respectively 1 and -1 and all the other entries are equal to zero.

B) For each vertex $v = v_{p_i}$ in $V'(G)$, $i = 1, \dots, r$ we define the h_i matrices:

$$a_{v,t} := \text{diag}(0, \dots, 0, \sqrt{2}i_t, 0, \dots, 0), \quad t = 1, \dots, h_i$$

each having exactly one non null entry indexed p_i .

C) In the case where $0 < 2m < n$, for each vertex $w = v_{q_j}$, $j = 1, \dots, m$ we introduce the matrix

$$a_w := \text{diag}(0, \dots, 0, i_{h+1}, 0, \dots, i_{h+1}, 0, \dots, 0),$$

where the two non null entries are indexed respectively q_j and q_{j+m} .

Observe that for each of these matrices, the fact that the real bilinear form on \mathbb{A}^n on the right hand side of (8) is skew-symmetric is guaranteed by the adjoint properties of \mathbb{A} . Taking into account the isomorphism $\mathbb{A}^n \cong V_0 \otimes \mathbb{R}^{2^M}$ such that

$$i_k \bar{e}_i \mapsto v_i \otimes e_{k+1},$$

the corresponding operators differ slightly from those defined in the proof of Theorem 1, since the twist function γ comes into play; namely one gets:

$$\begin{aligned} J_\delta &= \sum_{k=1}^{2^M} F_{v_i \otimes e_k}^{v_i \otimes e_k} \\ J_{v,t} &= \sqrt{2} \sum_{(k,k') \in C_t} \gamma(t, k') F_{v \otimes e_{k'}}^{v \otimes e_k} \\ J_w &= \sum_{(k,k') \in C_{h+1}} \gamma(h+1, k') F_{w \otimes e_{k'}}^{w \otimes e_k} + \sum_{(k,k') \in C_{h+1}} \gamma(h+1, k') F_{w' \otimes e_{k'}}^{w' \otimes e_k} \end{aligned}$$

where $C = C_{\mathbb{A}}$ is the colouring of K_{2^M} considered above. Again W_G is a uniform subspace of $\mathfrak{so}(\mathbb{A}^n)$, yielding that $\mathfrak{n}_{\mathbb{A}}$ is an Einstein nilradical.

EXAMPLE 1. Let G be the graph obtained from the complete graph K_6 by removing all the edges $\{i, j\}$ with i, j both in $\{1, 2, 3, 4\}$. It can be checked directly that this graph is not positive (cf. also the classification in [7, Table 1]), so that \mathfrak{n}_G is not an Einstein nilradical. In this case $(N, s) = (2, 18)$ so that $\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{H}$ and $\mathfrak{n}_{\mathbb{H}} = \mathbb{H}^6 \oplus W_G$, where W_G is determined via (8) by the following 18 square matrices of order 6 with entries in \mathbb{H} :

$$\begin{aligned} &E_{56} - E_{65}, E_{i5} - E_{5i}, E_{i6} - E_{6i}, \quad i = 1, \dots, 4, \\ &\text{diag}(\sqrt{2}i, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0), \text{diag}(\sqrt{2}j, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0), \\ &\text{diag}(0, \sqrt{2}i, 0, 0, 0, 0), \text{diag}(0, \sqrt{2}j, 0, 0, 0, 0), \\ &\text{diag}(0, 0, \sqrt{2}i, 0, 0, 0), \text{diag}(0, 0, \sqrt{2}j, 0, 0, 0), \\ &\text{diag}(0, 0, 0, \sqrt{2}i, 0, 0), \text{diag}(0, 0, 0, \sqrt{2}j, 0, 0), \\ &\text{diag}(0, 0, 0, 0, k, k). \end{aligned}$$

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