

POSTCOLONIAL MIMICRY AND ETHNIC HIERARCHIES IN KHALED HOSSEINI'S *THE KITE RUNNER*

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Abstract

This study analyzed Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003) to expose the legacy of colonial authoritarianism and racial hierarchies that exist within ethnic tensions. Ethnic hierarchies and authoritarian power structures often have deep historical roots and are sustained in institutions in many multi-ethnic societies, making them seem natural in social life. This research examines the representation of ethnic hierarchies in the novel, the construction of the authoritarian legacy, and its reflection on Afghanistan's broader ethnic conflict. This analysis employed a qualitative method, using Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory of mimicry as the analytical framework. Primary data were drawn from the novel, supported by secondary scholarly sources. Previous studies have discussed trauma, racism, and ethnic oppression in the novel; however, limited attention has been given to how colonial authoritarian ideology is reproduced through postcolonial mimicry. This study contributes to postcolonial literary criticism by demonstrating how mimicry operates not merely as cultural imitation but as a mechanism for reproducing authoritarian violence. The findings reveal how the ethnic hierarchy is reinforced through religious discrimination, physical stereotyping, and structural exclusion. Entrenched ethnic hierarchies and authoritarian legacies reproduced through mimicry and institutionalized by Taliban governance. The conclusion reveals how the colonial legacies continuously reproduce structures of power and racial inequality, which affirms that as a literary text, *The Kite Runner* reflects both personal redemption and the persistence of colonial legacies in sustaining ethnic oppression. This study is limited to textual analysis and does not address broader historical complexities.

Keywords: *authoritarianism; colonial legacy; ethnic hierarchy; mimicry; postcolonialism.*

1. Introduction

Ethnic conflict remains one of the most persistent socio-political challenges in multi-ethnic societies. The term "ethnic conflict" is used in a situation where different ethnic groups get tangled in a conflict massively affected by ethnic identity (Güven, 2024). Ethnic conflict is caused by the separation between ethnic groups, which leads to tension and physical abuse (Karar, 2022). Such conflicts often emerge when one ethnic group dominates political power, causing tension and power struggle between different ethnic groups. In this

context, ethnicity itself is not the inherent cause of conflict, but is rather a shared identity used by the elites as a tool for seizure of power and resources (Manea, 2024: 11–12). Domination is further reinforced through classification, where groups that are prominently defined tend to view themselves as superior to others (Nwagboh, 2022).

Authoritarianism compounds these dynamics by institutionalizing ethnic hierarchy. It is not merely a governance system, but also a mindset of control ingrained in the logic, language, and action of rulers (Koch, 2022: 2). Domination by the majority enables them to have rights to punish marginalized groups, especially those who are believed to have crossed a boundary thought to be universal (Osborne et al., 2023). In multi-ethnic states, this pattern produces compounding discrimination. The dominant groups consolidate political and economic control while marginalized communities face exclusion, structural violence, and displacement. Crucially, authoritarian regimes also justify and reinforce racial and ethnic superiority through laws and social practices.

In some countries, ethnic groups compete for power through ethnic-based parties, while dominant groups discriminate to maintain control, leading to domination and abuse of marginalized groups. Afghanistan presents a particularly acute illustration of this dynamic. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country, consisting of about fifty ethnic groups. Among those, the Pashtun is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, followed by Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Aimaq, Turkmen, Baluch, and other small ethnic groups (Adhikary, 2021). At the end of the 19th century, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan led the violent act which causes massacre, slavery, and displacements of around 60% of the Hazara population (Hakimi, 2024). This violence established an ethnic hierarchy encoded in social memory, institutional practice, and political legitimacy, one that subsequent regimes would inherit and reproduce. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, conflicts among *Mujahideen* factions caused extreme political and social chaos that enabled the Taliban to rise to power (Kakar et al., 2025). Under Taliban rule, policies and governance were largely centered on the interests of the Pashtun majority (Ashrafian, 2023).

These historical conditions form the material and ideological context of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003). The novel narrates ethnic discrimination against Hazara people through social exclusion, targeted bullying and sexual violence. Explicitly through the character of Hassan, a Hazara boy subjected to systemic abuse within an Afghan society. The antagonist Assef articulates this hierarchy explicitly, positioning Hazara people as racially inferior and socially illegitimate within the Afghan nation. As a postcolonial literary text, *The Kite Runner* not only reflects ethnic oppression but also examines how authoritarian ideology is produced and sustained through every social relation and institutional power.

However, many previous studies have examined with Hazara oppression, class conflict, and trauma, but has not examined how colonial authoritarian legacies are reproduced through mimicry. This study investigates dominant groups imitate and perpetuate colonial structures of racial hierarchy through social practice and institutionalized power. This gap carries significant theoretical implications. Conventional political approaches tend to reduce authoritarianism to a structural system of governance, treating it as a set of institutional arrangements that concentrate power and suppress dissent. While this framing offers a useful foundation, it remains limited in explaining how authoritarian ideology continues to operate beyond formal political institutions. It cannot fully account for the ways such ideology becomes internalized, normalized, and reproduced

through discourse, identity formation, and everyday social relations. Postcolonial theory addresses precisely this dimension. Postcolonialism refers not only to the period after colonialism, but also to the continuing influence of colonial legacies and hierarchical systems of power in contemporary society (Zhang, 2023). A postcolonial reading examines how authoritarian logic is reproduced, circulated, and internalized by the very subjects it subordinates.

Within this framework, Homi K Bhabha concept of mimicry (1994) is especially productive. Mimicry describes how colonial authority is sustained not through direct imposition alone but through ambivalent imitation. In the Afghan context, Pashtun dominance over the Hazara cannot be reduced to Taliban coercion alone. It is reproduced through everyday social performances of superiority and institutional structures that encode racial difference as political fact. Mimicry is significant in this context because it explains how colonial patterns of authority continue to operate through imitation, ambivalence, and ideological reproduction.

This study investigates: (1) identify racial hierarchies in Afghanistan as represented in the novel; (2) analyze how authoritarian legacies are constructed; and (3) explore how the ethnic conflict reflects authoritarian reproduction.

2. Literature Review

In postcolonial studies, the term “postcolonial” refers not only to the period after colonialism, but also the continuing influence of neo-colonial domination, social inequality, and hierarchical systems of power in post- independence societies (Ashcroft et al., 2024). As a multidisciplinary field, it incorporates different elements such as Marxism, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychoanalysis, feminism, and poststructuralism. Moreover, postcolonialism critiques how colonial literature reinforced the subjugation of colonized peoples (Bartiza & Zrizi, 2022). (Bhandari, 2022) identifies four models of resistance, ranging from rewriting colonial narratives to transforming material and cultural circumstances, which inform this study’s focus on mimicry as a site where colonial subjects negotiate and destabilize imposed identities.

As the pioneer of postcolonialism as a paradigm, Homi K. Bhabha argues that postcoloniality serves as a helpful reminder of the international division of labor and the enduring "neo-colonial" ties under the "new" world order (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha's framework accepts the difficulties of poststructuralism to stable or fixed identities by allowing attention to the ways that roles, gender, community, and nationality interact. He highlights these several points of interaction, in the production of culture and identity, as well as emphasizing that the process of constructing the past and present is still continuous and unfinished.

Within postcolonialism, mimicry exemplifies how colonial legacies reproduced through ambivalent imitation, a framework central to analyzing ethnic hierarchies in Afghanistan. This framework provides a lens to examine Homi K. Bhabha’s theory of mimicry as the analytical framework that is based in the instability of the colonial discourse itself. Homi K. Bhabha proposes concepts such as hybridity, ambivalence, third space, and mimicry, which all correlates to one another. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha states that mimicry describes how colonized subjects imitate the colonizer’s language and values,

appearing 'almost the same but not quite,' thereby exposing the instability of colonial authority.

According to Homi K. Bhabha, mimicry is based on ambivalence; mimicry must continuously produce its excess, difference, and slippage in order to be effective. A double articulation, a complex reform, regulation, and discipline strategy that "appropriates" the Other while envisioning authority, is thus what mimicry is a symptom of. The desire to appear "authentic" through imitation is the final irony of imperfect representation. Imitation will constantly highlight the differences, strengthening the postcolonial subjects' unstable sense of belonging in the diasporic setting rather than facilitating full assimilation (Siddiq et al., 2026). In this sense, mimicry contributes to the continuation of ideological violation.

This study positions mimicry as a political mechanism through which authoritarian ideology and ethnic hierarchy are continuously reproduced within postcolonial society. Mimicry becomes a mechanism of political violence when colonial logic is institutionalized through governance, law, and enforced social hierarchy. When dominant ethnic group adopt racial classifications and authoritarian practices from colonial processors, mimicry becomes structurally coercive. In the Afghan context, this process is visible in the way Pashtun political authority produced and institutionalized imperialism, transforming ethnic distinctions into instruments of systematic oppression against the Hazara. The Taliban governance, in particular, exemplifies how authoritarian rule can function as an institutionalized form of mimicry. The Taliban replicate and intensify colonial structures of domination under the guise of indigenous political authority. Racial classifications become institutionalize through their repeated citation across successive political formations, each iteration rendering hierarchy more natural and less contingent (Bhabha, 1994). What appears as a nativist or religious order is therefore, in Bhabha's terms, mimicry of colonial domination. It is the same logic of racial subjugation, authorized through different ideological registers. This framework provides a lens to examine how ideological domination and ethnic hierarchy are represented in *The Kite Runner*.

Previous research related to *The Kite Runner* discussed Hazara oppression and systemic ethnic hierarchy rooted in Pashtun domination (Shaikh et al., 2025; Wagle, 2023), as well as racism and the dehumanization of Hazara communities (Hakim, 2022). Furthermore, some studies have shed light on the class conflict and social gap (Ergasheva, 2025; Srivastava et al., 2025), the psychological trauma of Hazara group (magsi et al., 2024; Mukta & Sumona, 2022), and Amir's traumatic consequences of his regret which pushed his self-redemption (Bhattarai, 2024; S. Khan et al., 2021; Narzary, 2024). Similar study examined colonial violence and the continuation of oppression from the Soviet invasion to Taliban governance through Frantz Fanon's theory of violence (Naveed, 2024). While these studies provide important insights into marginalization, few have applied mimicry theory to Afghan ethnic hierarchies as represented in *The Kite Runner*.

Taken together, Bhabha's concept of mimicry establishes the theoretical foundation for the present study. Mimicry provides a framework for examining how ideological domination, ethnic hierarchy, and authoritarian power are reproduced through ambivalent imitation within postcolonial society. Through this perspective, *The Kite Runner* is positioned as a postcolonial text that reveals the normalization of ethnic violence and hierarchical domination within Afghan society. Accordingly, mimicry guides the study's analytical lens in interpreting how authoritarian ideology and ethnic hierarchy operate throughout the novel.

3. Research Method

A qualitative approach was chosen to analyze social aspects in a literary text, allowing interpretation of colonial authoritarianism and ethnic hierarchies. It focuses on the way ideological mimicry and ethnic identity are negotiated within the narrative. Qualitative methods help researchers understand complex social phenomena by focusing on people's experiences, perspectives, and the meanings they attach to their social realities (Lim, 2025). Because this research analyzes social aspects in a literary text, the qualitative method is considered appropriate for identifying and interpreting how the legacy of authoritarianism and ethnic hierarchies are formed in the story.

3.1 Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive qualitative design grounded in postcolonial literary analysis, with Homi K. Bhabha's theory of mimicry serving as the primary interpretive framework. Within this framework, mimicry explains the process by which subjugated subjects imitate dominant authority in an ambivalent and imperfect manner. It functions as the central analytical lens through which character behavior, power relations, and ethnic conflict in the novel are examined. The researcher maintained reflexivity throughout by acknowledging as an academic interpreter of a culturally and historically specific text.

3.2 Data Sources

Primary data were drawn from *The Kite Runner* (2003), including all narrative passages, dialogue, and descriptive language relevant to the research questions. For instance, passages depicting the Pashtun-Hazara hierarchy illuminate how racial stratification is normalized within social space; and scenes involving Taliban rule demonstrate how authoritarian power is performed and internalized. Data selection was purposive and criterion-based: words, sentences, and extended passages were selected based on their thematic and linguistic engagement with ethnic stratification, authoritarian behavior, and the reproduction of colonial power structures. Secondary data included scholarly articles, journals, and theoretical texts on postcolonialism, mimicry, and Afghan history. Data were gathered using an observation sheet during close reading, focusing on words, phrases, and passages relevant to the research questions.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection method was guided by textual analysis sheet to record the data as the result of close reading and interpretation of the novel *The Kite Runner* (2003). Each textual unit was noted for both its surface meaning and its deeper ideological implications within the postcolonial framework. Primary instrument used in this study was textual analysis sheet designed for systematic close reading. The sheet was structured to gather: (1) the textual unit in the form of a quotation or paraphrase, (2) the page reference, (3) the thematic category, and (4) the theoretical relevance based on Bhabha's concept of mimicry. This instrument ensured that data collection remained focused and consistent throughout the entire reading process.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed descriptively and interpretively across three stages. The first stage involved textual coding, identifying its key and ideological feature. The second stage involved thematic categorization, in which related codes were grouped into broader analytical clusters corresponding to the study's research questions. The third stage involved interpretive analysis, in which each thematic cluster was examined through Bhabha's theory of mimicry.

3.5 Validity

Data credibility was ensured through triangulation with secondary sources and theoretical consistency. This study employed triangulation by comparing textual findings from *The Kite Runner* with scholarly and historical sources discussing Afghan ethnic conflict, authoritarianism and postcolonialism. Interpretation was guided by Bhabha's theory of mimicry, focusing on ambivalence and imperfect imitation as mechanisms of authoritarian reproduction. Repeated reading and cross-checking of the textual evidence were also conducted to strengthen interpretive reliability and academic rigor.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Representation of Ethnic Hierarchies in *The Kite Runner*

Ethnic hierarchy in *The Kite Runner* is a structural foundation. Hosseini represents Hazara marginalization as a condition that is produced rather than naturally existing. Bhabha (1994) identifies this production as the work of the colonial stereotype: a discursive mechanism that fixes racial difference as knowable, stable, and inevitable. Pashtun is the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, while Hazara is the marginalized ethnic group. In the novel, this fixity operates through four interlocking systems: historical violence, religious difference, physical stigmatization, and enforced class position. The historical dimension is established early. Amir recounts how Pashtuns subjected Hazaras to massacre, land seizure, and the enslavement of women (Hosseini, 2003: 9). Historically, this oppression could be traced back to Abdur Rahman Khan's governance in 1890-1893, which led to the Hazara rebellion (Hakimi, 2024: 86). This past violence sets the foundation for present hierarchy in the novel.

Religious difference also compounds this hierarchy. Hazaras are predominantly Shi'a in a Sunni dominant society. The Shi'a and Isma'ili communities are considered *kafir* (infidels) by Sunni Pashtuns (Hakimi, 2024: 85). In the novel, this difference is institutionalized through the *mullah's* classroom teachings, which frame Shi'a identity as false and degraded (Hosseini, 2003: 10). The *mullah's* statements do not only accuse Shi'a of false martyrdom, they strip Hazara identity of humanity by presenting it as something contemptible and beneath serious consideration. It is the normalization of ethnic contempt through institutional authority, where the classroom becomes a *situ* for reproducing hierarchy as religious truth.

Physical difference reinforces this further. Hazara is the descendant of Genghis Khan's soldiers and have historically been regarded as non-indigenous to Afghanistan (Khan, 2024: 11-12). In the novel, the people of Hazara are described to have Mongoloid physical features and are often tied with Mongols, who are said to be similar to Chinese people (Hosseini, 2003: 9). Moreover, class position consolidates all of these distinctions. Hassan and Ali, a Hazaras, occupy a permanently subordinate domestic role, their labor encoding

their ethnic position in everyday spatial terms (Hosseini, 2003: 49). Their limited access to education, economic mobility, and authority reflects systemic inequality embedded within everyday social relations.

4.2 Legacy of Authoritarianism in Afghanistan Constructed in The Story

4.2.1 Western Influence and Elite Mimicry in Reproducing Imperial Ideology

There are broader influences that shaped Afghanistan's authoritarian political system. The legacy of authoritarianism in *The Kite Runner* is not constructed through direct colonization, but rather through forms of imperial influence. Imperialism does not always require physical residence, but rather works through economic, military, and cultural domination (Said, 1994: 9–10). In the novel itself, traces of imperialism show itself subtly through the representation of "The West", and more clearly defined through the characters who adopt and apply those ideologies.

In the novel, Baba embodies this process. He is known as a rich, generous, principled man and came from an educated family. Baba reflects values that are often associated with the West modernity, such as individualism, secularism, and social mobility. In 1963, Afghanistan had an elite ruler who is open-minded, modernist, and secular, and the majority of his members have pursued higher education in West countries (Jalali, 2024). Even though modernization was debated, by the 1970s Afghanistan had become modern and fairly secular state (Nawabi & Kolozi, 2022). Additionally, the relationship between Afghanistan with the United States strengthens this influence since the ear of Zahir Shah (Khalid et al., 2025). Together, those factors account the historical formation of Afghan's elite class.

In the novel, Baba is depicted as a successful businessman in Kabul with a carpet business, an apothecary, and a restaurant (Hosseini, 2003: 15). He also adopts a consumptive lifestyle by owning a luxurious house, holding big parties, to owning a car such as the Ford Mustang often linked to popular culture in The West (Hosseini, 2003: 5 & 27). He has a moral framework built on personal integrity rather than collective religious or tribal obligation (Hosseini, 2003: 17). He dismisses the *mullahs* as intellectually hollow and declares alcohol permissible. That reflect liberal individualism rather than Afghan cultural or religious norms and signs that the elite class of Afghanistan has become associated with the capitalism and consumerism values of The West.

Read through Bhabha's framework, Baba exemplifies mimicry. He performs and reproducing the logic of Western modernity as the standard of sophistication and authority. The capitalism and the secular moral code are performances of a Western identity that positions Baba within modernity. Yet Baba's mimicry remains partial. He speaks the ethical language of Western liberalism, but within a society whose structural hierarchies he does not fundamentally challenge. His household still depends on Hazara servants. His moral individualism coexists with the ethnic order he never directly contests. This ambivalence is precisely what Bhabha identifies as the structural condition of mimicry: the imitation is never complete, and its incompleteness exposes the contradiction between the values performed and the hierarchies sustained.

4.2.2 Ideological Mimicry and Racial Supremacy in Authoritarian Violence

If Baba represents the subtle form of imperialism, then Assef represents a more extreme example. Rather than imitating the civility, he the violent side of power, especially

racial supremacy and ethnic domination. He appropriates Western supremacist ideology, explicitly modeling his vision of ethnic purity on Adolf Hitler (Hosseini, 2003: 40). He frames Hazaras as racial pollutants and Afghanistan as exclusively Pashtun territory, reproducing the logic of racial purity, marginalization, and legitimized violence that characterizes Nazi ideology. Assef did not derive this worldview from Afghan tradition. He consciously absorbed it from an external model of racial domination and transplanted it onto a different ethnic landscape.

Bhabha explained, mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other: a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite (Bhabha, 1994: 122). Mimicry reproduces its structure of power while generating difference in the process. The Nazi ideological structure is reproduced, but in a different cultural context, directed at a different ethnic target, and authorized through different historical grievances. The novel reveals how supremacist ideology is reproduced through mimicry, preserving authoritarian logic while displacing it onto a different cultural and ethnic context.

Bhabha argues that the colonial stereotype operates through fixity. This fixity is paradoxical because it simultaneously demands a stable, ordered presentation of racial difference while also producing images of degeneracy, disorder, and demonic repetition. In other words, colonial discourse cannot maintain a single, stable stereotype without constantly revealing its own instability and anxiety (Bhabha, 1994: 94). Assef's construction of the Hazara as racial pollutants is a fixed representation. Assef's later alignment with the Taliban demonstrates how this logic is institutionalized. He retains the same ideology of ethnic domination, that reauthorized through religious absolutism. The label shifts from Nazi racial supremacy to Islamic extremism, but the authoritarian structure of fixity, dehumanization, and legitimized violence remains constant.

4.3 The Legacy of Authoritarian Reflected in Afghanistan Ethnic Conflict

The Taliban's emergence in *The Kite Runner* is not represented as a purely indigenous political development. Hosseini situates it within a longer arc of foreign intervention and proxy warfare that partially shaped Afghanistan's political culture before the Taliban ever seized power. Most of Taliban people are Pashtuns, with Islamic education taught in madrasa (Sakhi, 2022). Way before the Taliban held full authority, Afghanistan had become the battleground of foreign interests. During The Cold War, the USA saw Afghanistan as a strategic site to hinder the Soviet expansion. The relationship between America and Afghanistan shifted from economic and diplomatic cooperation into geopolitical rivalry that turned Afghanistan into a proxy battlefield (Yawar, 2024).

The Mujahideen were trained in guerilla warfare and military operations under US policy through collaboration between the US and Pakistan's ISI, with financial support from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to resist the Soviet and Kabul governments (Imran & Xiaochuan, 2016). *Mujahideen* had learned their battle skills either directly from CIA training programs or from *Mujahideen* commanders trained by the CIA itself (Armajani, 2021: 257) The United States recruited young Muslim men to fight in Afghanistan, framing their participation as *jihad* to serve American geopolitical interests (Prescott, 2021). This effort was formalized when President Carter approved a covert CIA program supplying the Mujahideen with military weapons, ammunition, and material support (Zanchetta, 2025). The Taliban emerged specifically from Pashtun Mujahideen factions who received training in Pakistani

madrasas (Kakar et al., 2025). Such military training could act as an authoritarian model which will be imitated by the *Mujahideen*.

In the novel, the Taliban's arrival is initially welcomed precisely because the Northern Alliance had governed through comparable brutality (Hosseini, 2003: 200). It suggests that public support for the Taliban emerged less from ideological acceptance than from the desire to escape a previous form of authoritarian violence. The Taliban installed a governance of fear: strict social controls, public punishment, and the violent regulation of private life (Hosseini, 2003: 198–253). Critically, this order was sustained without functioning legal institutions or administrative infrastructure, substituting religious edict for law (Ameyaw-Brobbe, 2023). The Taliban reproduced the authoritarian logic of absolute power and enforced compliance, but stripped of its institutional form, their authority depended entirely on the continuous performance of violence.

This aligns with Bhabha theory of mimicry. Bhabha argues that colonial power operates through a strategy of reforming, regulating, and disciplining the colonized subject, projecting a vision of what authority should look like and training subjects to reproduce it, while mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, and its difference in order to remain effective (Bhabha, 1994: 122). The Taliban reliance on spectacle such as, public executions, stadium violence, the performance of punishment as governance, show this excess. It is the sign of an authority that cannot stabilize itself through institutions and must therefore restate itself through force. The interference of The West earlier could be an authoritarian model that Afghanistan would later imitate. The Taliban is almost the same as the authoritarian imperial model that shaped them. They implement absolute control, demand unconditional compliance, and utilizes fear and punishment as the governance instruments.

In the novel, Assef, as a Taliban representation, makes this logic explicit at the individual level. He frames the massacre of Hazaras in Mazar-i-Sharif as ethnic cleansing and God's work, means a civilizing mission to purify the nation of its racial pollutants (Hosseini, 2003: 277). He practiced the Nazi ideology which he idolized in the governance. It mirrors the colonial justification of violence as necessary order, now reauthorized through religious absolutism. The ideological structure of racial hierarchy, dehumanization, and legitimized extermination is the same one Assef absorbed from Hitler in childhood, now institutionalized through Taliban governance. This is a reflection of a parallel between the Nazi ideology and the ethnic hierarchy that exist between Pashtun and Hazara, as both operate through the notions of purity, superiority, and the legitimization of violence to those deemed inferior.

The Taliban deployed Islamic radicalism to legitimize their rule and project an image of authentic renewal. Yet as Bhabha argues, the attempt to appear authentic through imitation ultimately reveals the irony of partial representation (Bhabha, 1994: 126). In seeking to reproduce the authoritarian model they inherited, the Taliban positioned themselves as legitimate sovereign power, believing that mimicking the colonizer's structures of control would confer validity and authority. Instead, mimicry exposed their inefficacy. They could not fully become what they imitated, and in the process of imitation they distanced themselves from the legitimacy of their own cultural and religious tradition. What presented itself as Islamic governance was neither authentically Islamic nor fully authoritarian in the inherited imperial sense. It occupied an unstable space between the two, sustained only through the continuous performance of violence.

Yet the mimicry ultimately exposes its own failure. The turn from mimicry to menace is the consequences of authoritarianism without system and legitimacy. When the performance of authority exceeds its institutional basis, Bhabha argues, the insignia of authority becomes a mask, a mockery (Bhabha, 1994: 172). The Taliban's claim to authentic Islamic governance collapse under the weight of its own excess. The spectacle of public violence, the ethnic massacres justified as divine mandate, and the governance that produces nothing but fear that revealed. The Taliban is a reproduction of imperial authoritarian logic wearing religious language as camouflage. The mockery lies in the gap between the claim to authenticity and the reality of imitation. The Taliban attempted to be the legitimate successor to both Islamic tradition and Afghan sovereignty but achieved neither, becoming instead a distorted echo of the imperial models that shaped them. Their governance upholds nothing of the authentic Islamic tradition and partially shaped by inherited structures of militarized control dressed in religious language.

This analysis extends Naveed's (2024) study on colonial violence through Fanon's framework by demonstrating how *The Kite Runner* represents Taliban governance as the reproduction of authoritarian ideology through mimicry. Through Bhabha's framework, the novel reveals not only violence against Hazara communities, but also how authoritarian logic is reproduced, transmitted, and destabilized by its own incompleteness.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed the legacy of colonial authoritarianism and also the racial hierarchies that exist in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* (2003). The novel is presented as a personal narrative of guilt and redemption, yet it simultaneously reveals how in Afghanistan's social and political structure, ethnic oppression and authoritarian power play a big part in the social and political structure. By using Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry, this study analyzed how authoritarianism is reproduced through imperial influence, ethnic supremacy ideology, and institutionalized systems of control. The findings demonstrate that ethnic hierarchy in the novel is a historically constructed system maintained through religion, physical differences, and social exclusion. Hazara marginalization is depicted through every day practices, highlighting systemic inequality. The indirect imperial influence, especially through military training and ideology, shaped the legacy of authoritarianism. This analysis reveals Baba and Assef as two forms of mimicry: Baba adopts Western values as his life style, while Assef turns supremacist ideologies into violence. Both Assef's mimicry and Nazi's ideology rely on ideas of purity, superiority, and the justification of violence towards those deemed inferior, showing us that there is a direct parallelism between the two. The Taliban exemplifies institutionalized authoritarianism, where mimicry evolves into coercive governance.

As a reflection, this study finds that the authoritarianism in *The Kite Runner* is applied subtly and is deeply integrated in everyday social structures, which makes it appear natural and unquestioned. Bhabha's concept of mimicry assisted in revealing that such power is not original, but is instead inherited and endlessly reproduced. However, the findings are limited by the single-text focus and reliance on one theoretical framework, which may restrict generalizability. Future studies could examine other Afghan or South Asian texts, or apply alternative postcolonial frameworks such as hybridity or subaltern theory. This study encourages readers to critically engage with literary texts as reflections of power, identity, and inequality shaped by colonial legacies.

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