STUDY GUIDE

ISTANBUL OKAN UNIVERSITY
MODEL UNITED NATIONS

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
ARİNA ASYA AGÜN

sochum

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.   Letter from the Secretary-General
Dear Participants,

I'm delighted to point out that it is my utmost pleasure and honor to serve as the Secretary-General of OKANMUN'25. Throughout the three days of our precious conference, different matters on different committees shall be discussed and very important decisions shall be taken on various past and present events that have already or will have a major impact on our lives. From political controversies to social and daily life problems, we will be creating an active atmosphere for our participants to enjoy and remember every moment they will have during the conference and find efficient as well as prudent solutions by having heated and accurate debates.

Heated and accurate debates require a well-executed and ideally placed preparation process. Therefore, our talented academic team has prepared study guides for their committees so that our participants will have a proper document to get prepared for our conference and perform accordingly.

I believe OKANMUN'25 will be a conference where many first timers will discover their inner diplomats and politicians, who had to hold back and keep it hidden for several reasons that no one knows. Hope to see you dear participants to shape the United Nations and Model United Nations to a better and lasting effulgence. It is thanks to our ancestors who guided us to who we are today. Trust in yourselves and stand out for a better world for everyone. Therefore, I would like to remind everyone of a saying from our Great Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk,

"If one day you are helpless, don't wait for a savior. Be the savior, yourself!"

EZGİ AKPINAR

Secretary-General of OKANMUN'25

2.   Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Hey everyone!

I'm Arina Asya AGUN, and I'll be your USG for the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly — SOCHUM — at this year's OKANMUN. I'm currently in my third year at Okan University and I'm studying Russian Translation and Interpreting, and I've been part of the MUN world for a while now, both as a delegate and on the dais.

This GA committee, SOCHUM, covers some pretty important topics like human rights, social justice, and humanitarian issues — basically, the kind of stuff that impacts people's lives. As your USG, I'm here to help make sure debates stay productive, respectful, and honestly, as enjoyable as possible. Whether it's your first conference or your tenth, I hope this experience helps you challenge your thinking, grow as an individual and have a good time.

Feel free to reach out if you've got any questions before or during the conference — I'm always happy to help.

Can't wait to see what you all bring to the table!

Best,

Arina

arina.asya.agun@gmail.com

3.   Introduction to the Committee

3.1.   The Foundation and Historical Background of SOCHUM

The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly is officially called the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee, and is commonly referred to as SOCHUM. Founded in 1947 at the inception of the United Nations General Assembly, it focuses on the social and humanitarian affairs of the general world population. All 193 member states of theUnited Nations General Assembly are considered members of the third Committee. As such, SOCHUM is neatly positioned to discuss and make recommendations on global issues since it represents international opinion.

This committee addresses the protection of the rights of children, women, and refugees, focusing on topics such as crime prevention, drug regulation, and efforts to combat racial discrimination and racism. SOCHUM's strong focus on human rights played a key role in the creation of the UN Human Rights Council in 2006.

4.   Agenda Item A

4.1.   Introduction

As human lives transition online, so do human rights. While human rights were developed at a time before the accelerated dynamics of digitization, their value to protect every individual remains the same. To fully enjoy their safeguards, our understandings, frameworks, the roles of different actors, and tools to protect and promote human rights, need to be refined, clarified, revised, and updated. The key word is 'transition': human rights protections need to be effectively enforced in the digital sphere. Only then, will the affirmation that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online" be truly meaningful.

4.2. Key Terms

Artificial Intelligence (AI): technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, and autonomy. It's what makes Siri, smart cars, and Netflix recommendations work.

Human Rights: The rights we have simply because we exist as human beings. Regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, sexuality, or any other status. It is the right to live. The fundamental rights and freedoms that every person is entitled to, such as freedom of expression, privacy, and equality before the law.

Risk Management: the process of identifying, assessing, and addressing any financial, legal, strategic, and security threats to an organization. In the context of AI, it involves evaluating potential human rights risks and implementing measures to ease them.

Bias and Discrimination: Unfair treatment of individuals based on characteristics such as race, gender, or age.

Bias in AI: The unfair treatment, reinforcement of stereotypes, and potential harm to minority groups caused by unequal or discriminatory data and systems.

Surveillance and Censorship: The use of technology to monitor users' activities or suppress information. With AI, in the wrong hands, it could lead to privacy invasions or even stop people from expressing themselves.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030.

Cognitive Liberty: This is the right to self-determination over our brain and our mental experiences.The right to both access and use technologies, but also a right to be free from interference with our mental privacy and freedom of thought..

Rights-Impacting Artificial Intelligence: AI systems that have the potential to affect, positively or negatively, individuals' human rights such as privacy, equality, freedom of expression, and access to justice.

Algorithmic Accountability: The people or organizations who create or use algorithms are responsible for making sure they are fair, accurate, and don't cause harm.

Contestability: The ability for individuals to challenge and seek redress against decisions made by AI systems, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA): A process for identifying, understanding, assessing, and addressing the adverse effects of business projects or policies on human rights.

Transparency: The quality of being open and clear. Everything is visible and not hidden. If talked about how AI systems operate, it is possible for stakeholders to understand and trust AI decisions.

Accountability: The obligation of organizations and individuals to be answerable for the outcomes of AI systems, including unintended consequences.

Explainability: The extent to which the internal mechanics of an AI system can be explained in human terms, aiding in understanding and trust

4.2. Historical Context and Development of AI

4.2.1. The Starting Process of Artificial Intelligence and The Question "Can Machines Think?"

Before the term " Artificial Intelligence" was used philosophers and mathematicians like Alan Turing laid the groundwork. He was one of the most influential figures in his period. In his paper released in 1950 titled " Computation Machinery and Intelligence", Turing introduced the provocative question: "Can machines think?" This question not only sparked debate but also laid the main groundwork for the modern AI we have today.

Turing proposed a practical method to evaluate machine intelligence, named after him, the " Turing Test". This text helps us to determine if the machine is considered "intelligent" if it can engage in a conversation with a human without being detected as non-human. His idea shifted the focus from defining thought itself to assessing behavior. This was the key to developing artificial systems designed to mimic human reasoning.

4.2.2. Early Development of Artificial Intelligence

AI officially became a field in 1956 at the Dartmouth Conference, organized by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, andClaude Shannon. It was at this conference that the term "Artificial Intelligence" was coined. This marked the official birth of AI as a research field, aiming to create machines capable of performing tasks that are usually required by human intelligence.

Following the conference, the early AI programs showed promise in tasks like solving logic problems and playing games such as chess. This progress sparked high levels of optimism and ambitious expectations. However, the limited computing power of the time and a gap between expectations and real-world performance led to growing frustration.

The early research showed promise, but their progress was limited due to the technology. As challenges mounted and results fell short, funding and support for AI research sharply declined. Over time there was a significant drop in interest from governments and institutions, resulting in stalled development and reduced investment in the field.

Leading to the period of reduced interest known as AI Winters.

4.2.3.   Machine Beats Human

During the late 19th century and the beginning of the 2000s, AI advanced with expert systems and machine learning, allowing computers to learn from data. A key milestone of this is when IBM's Deep Blue defeated chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997.

Since then, deep learning and access to data have led to rapid progress. As the digital sphere became more common in our lives it's also raising serious questions about how it affects human rights.

4.2.4.   The Age of Invisible Influence

The Web was our new playground—wonderful, speedy, and endless. As we clicked, searched, and favorited pictures, something began to happen behind the scenes.

In the background, it was Google, Amazon, and the early social media giants who first used artificial intelligence-based recommendation engines. The algorithms observed us quietly—whom we looked at, what we bought, and what we did not buy. Over time, they understood our tastes better than we did ourselves. At first, it was as if magic was happening: You searched once for shoes, and the perfect pair appeared before you on every site you went to. A music track you liked. A thing you "needed."

Yet, this was done in secret. Without explanations. Without questions being asked. Our autonomy and freedom of information silently eroded. They operated in black boxes, without anyone's permission, and without anyone being held accountable—marking the end of online neutrality.

We did not know how, quietly, our society was being steered into digital echo chambers—supplied with information reinforcing our biases, limiting our exposure, and setting our perspective on the world. Without us being asked permission.

iPhone Released, and AI Enters Our Pockets

Suddenly, the net wasn't on your desk anymore—but in your hand, going wherever you went. And within this shining device was packed a thousand small systems of artificial intelligence operating behind the scenes to "simplify" your life.

You typed out a message, and your phone anticipated the next word. You snapped a picture, and your friends had been tagged. You had asked Siri something, and she had answered, getting to know you better with each query. You didn't know, though, how all the taps, the voice commands, the location check-ups had been harvested—stored, parsed, and traded.

For the very first time, corporations had real-time visibility into your behavior, your habits, your face, your voice, and your emotions. As customers, though, we were so awed by the convenience that we failed to ask ourselves: What's the cost?

This was normalization of surveillance—beneath public radar, without consideration or consent, or public input or oversight. Our rights to privacy began to erode, not through the government, but through apps installed and sleek gadgets.

4.2.5. Predictive Policing and the Shadow of Bias

Under the banner of "smart crime prevention," cities across America started releasing predictive policing programs—algorithms to predict where crimes would occur. The idea was simple: enter enough historical records of criminal activity, and it would tell you where to station the patrol cars.

However, such information had context—a context of decades of marginalization and over-policing within minority communities.

Soon enough, the trend was apparent: these systems weren't predicting crime; they were perpetuating bias. High-Black and high-brown neighborhoods again and again and again were being targeted by these systems. More surveillance resulted in more arrests, which provided more data to feed back into the system—a self-fulfilling prophecy. Technology was never neutral; it was proliferating injustice.

AI was intruding on the domain of the right to equality and freedom from discrimination. Policing was utilising black-box algorithms, but no one could open them or ask them questions about their basis.

4.2.6.   The Emergence of Facial Recognition in China

Smartphone to StateFace recognition systems had been rolled out in bulk in China. What had begun as unlocking phones or labeling images soon had much darker motivations. In cities, airports, and even schools, millions of people had their faces scanned in real time. The tech sped along, improved, inescapable.

And, in Xinjiang, where minority Uyghur Muslims live, face recognition was a means of repression. It was used through cameras and artificial intelligence systems to monitor behavior, expressions, and categorized actions—part of the world's first surveillance state.

The freedom of movement, protection from persecution, and the right to privacy had been virtually in jeopardy. The AI had become a weapon—not of war, but of control

This was the era when AI crossed a threshold. No longer just quirky tech or productivity tools, these systems began to touch the core of human dignity. The alarms were ringing—some governments listened, most did not.

4.3.   Actions Taken Regarding the Issue

4.3.1.   United Nations Efforts

4.3.1.1.   UN Human Rights Office

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been closely examining how artificial intelligence impacts people's basic rights. In a report done in 2021, the OHCHR warned that certain uses of AI, like surveillance tools, apocalyptic policing, and social scoring systems, could seriously harm the rights we often take for granted.

Some of the biggest concerns include:

Privacy: The use of AI in surveillance can lead to unauthorized data collection and monitoring, often happening without people's consent, undermining the right to privacy.

Freedom of expression and assembly: Automated content moderation systems that filter or take down content can limit people's ability to speak freely or organize protests.

Because of these risks, the OHCHR has called for strict regulations and in some cases, even temporary bans on high-risk uses of AI until stronger protections are in place.

4.3.1.2.   UNESCO Recommendations on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

In November 2021, UNESCO took on the first global standard on the ethics of AI. The main topics were:

Human rights-centered design: AI must be aligned with international human rights standards.

Transparency and accountability: Developers should inform the users how AI decisions are made, and address challenging harmful outcomes.

Banning harmful applications: recommending banning AI systems that are harmful to human rights, such as social scoring or mass surveillance used for surveillance.

Inclusive governance: Emphasizes ensuring AI development benefits all nations, not just tech-dominant nations.

4.3.2.   European Union Initiatives

Over the years, The European Union has been at the front line of regulation of AI protection on fundamental human rights. One of the most important steps in the EU AI Act proposed to ensure that high-risk possessing AI systems are properly regulated. The Act sets strict rules for these systems to ensure they do not harm people's rights or freedoms. An example is that AI systems must be transparent, secure, and especially accountable. If an AI system is considered too risky it could be prohibited entirely.

In addition to the AI Act, the EU also enforces The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which applies to systems that handle personal data. The GDPR places significant restrictions on how personal data can be collected, stored, and used ensuring that users' privacy rights are protected. It also has to be explainable and fair, meaning that AI must not be biased or discriminatory.

4.4.   Major Parties Involved

4.4.1.   Canada

Canada has been a global leader in ethical AI development and one of the first countries to recognize the importance of human rights. In 2017, Canada became the first country to launch a national AI strategy, The Pan-Canadian Artificial İntelligence Strategy. With this position, Canada has become at the forefront of responsible AI innovation while ensuring respect for privacy, transparency, and fairness.

Focus areas:

    - Preventing algorithmic bias

    - Protecting privacy and transparent AI

    - Regulating high-risk AI systems

    - Ethical use of AI in healthcare, education, and public services

4.4.2. France

France has positioned itself as a global leader in promoting ethical and human-centric artificial intelligence. They emphasize transparency, fairness, and the protection of individual rights. French policy focuses on developing AI in a way that would align with democratic values and human dignity.

Commissioned by the French government, the Villani Report emphasizes the importance of ethical AI. It's called for AI to serve the public interest and be inclusive of all citizens.

Focus areas:

- Preventing algorithmic bias on minority groups

- Protecting privacy and personal data

- Promoting trustworthy and transparent AI

4.4.3. Germany

Germany has been adamant in standing by its approach to ensuring AI technologies are respectful of core rights and enablers of democratic principles. In its national response, and for the remainder of the European Union at large, Germany has invested in creating responsible AI systems that protect individuals' freedom, privacy, and dignity.

In order to deal with AI's ethical concerns, Germany established an independent commission that provided guidelines on how AI and data can be utilized in a responsible manner. The panel suggested prohibiting certain AI applications, such as social scoring and blanket facial recognition, due to the risks they pose to human dignity.

Germany strongly supports the EU's call for the regulation of AI via the AI Act. The regulation is to cover the usage of high-risk AI systems—primarily those with the potential to harm individuals' rights—and completely prohibit harmful applications, such as biometric mass public surveillance in real-time.

Germany welcomes input from civil society, research institutions, and universities to help it make its AI policies. Thus, they can recognize issues such as discrimination through algorithms or abuse of personal data and come up with solutions that are acceptable to all.

Safeguarding individuals' privacy and freedom of expression.

Prevention of discrimination in AI systems.

Enabling transparency and simplicity in AI. Prohibiting AI uses against human dignity. Building public trust in technology.

4.4.4.   United Kingdom

As one of the leaders of the digital economy, the United Kingdom has taken a proactive and rights-conscious approach to AI. The UK promotes a human-centric and trustworthy AI ecosystem. This approach emphasizes transparency, accountability, data protection, and public trust in AI technologies.

The UK opened an Establishment of Center for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) in 2018. This establishment focuses on fairness, privacy, and preventing algorithmic bias.

Issued by CDEI in 2020 they identified AI-related risks in policing, healthcare, recruitment, and financial services.

The UK's approach offers a balanced model for regulating AI while keeping in mind the values of human rights.

4.4.5.　　　United States of America

The United States is pursuing a principle-driven, adaptable strategy toward regulating AI human rights dangers. It does not have an AI-specific law but has established some significant frameworks for encouraging ethical AI deployment and the guarding of civil liberties.
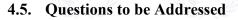
In 2022, the AI Bill of Rights outlined five general principles: systems that are safe and effective, discrimination protection, data privacy, transparency, and human alternatives for access. Although not binding, it serves to create a framework for accountable AI development.

Government bodies like the Federal Trade Commission have issued guidelines to discourage the misuse of AI, most recently for uses like face recognition technology and discriminatory algorithms. A 2023 presidential executive order heightened federal oversight and mandated more AI safety, data protection, and civil rights standards at the federal level.
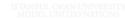
The American strategy emphasizes innovation but is attempting to protect privacy, equity, and democratic values.

4.4.6.　　　China

China has led the way in AI development since the 2017 National AI Development Plan Aimed to position the nation at the center of global AI powers by 2030. Though rapid growth has driven enhanced improvement in terms of innovation and economic growth, human rights are at the center. There has been the introduction of algorithms for algorithmic recommendation systems to structure online information and protect the rights of the people; however, these replicate state control international human rights standards. The large-scale usage of AI tech to match patterns of face recognition for surveillance—namely the tracking of ethnic groups like the Uyghurs—has raised several international alarms concerning privacy, freedom of expression, and discrimination. Though there has been Chinese participation in international AI ethics platforms, for example, the UNESCO-established platforms, state-centric internet governance is mainly advanced. Overall, the Chinese model is aimed at control and development at the center, at the price of human rights, which isn't in deep contradiction with rights-based systems supported by democratic governments.

4.5. Questions to be Addressed

- How can we ensure that AI technologies respect fundamental human rights, such as privacy, freedom of expression, and non-discrimination?

- What are the main risks posed by AI systems to vulnerable or marginalized populations?

- How should governments address algorithmic bias and systemic discrimination embedded in AI systems?

- Should there be a new international framework or treaty specifically addressing AI and human rights?

- Who should be held accountable when AI causes harm—developers, governments, or private companies?

- What mechanisms can ensure transparency in the decision-making of AI systems, especially in high-risk sectors like policing and healthcare?

- How can we ensure that all countries—especially developing nations—have access to safe, ethical AI technologies?

- How can countries work together to prevent AI from being used for mass surveillance, social credit systems, or authoritarian governance?

- When AI goes wrong, who is to blame — the developers, the government, or the private companies?

- What will it take to guarantee the enforceability of safe and ethical AI technologies everywhere, and not only among the developed nations?

- When is an AI system to be classified as "high-risk"?

5.   Agenda Item B

5.1.   Introduction

In our hyper-connected world, social media has become the new global town square—a place where cultures meet, clash, blend, and sometimes disappear. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter aren't just apps anymore; they're powerful engines reshaping how we understand ourselves and others. This raises urgent questions: Is social media preserving cultural diversity or flattening it into one homogenous digital culture? Are we witnessing a renaissance of cultural exchange or a new form of cultural imperialism?

The numbers speak volumes: over 4.9 billion social media users worldwide now consume and create cultural content at unprecedented speed. A traditional dance from Nigeria can go viral overnight, only to be stripped of its meaning and turned into the next global challenge. Indigenous languages once on the brink of extinction find new life through YouTube tutorials, while others get drowned out by dominant languages amplified by algorithms.

5.2.   Key Terms

Cultural Identity – The way people identify themselves in relation to shared traditions, language, history, and values. (e.g., A Japanese person doing tea ceremony versus one wearing a kimono simply because it is fashionable.)

Cultural Homogenization – When global culture (sometimes Western or internet-based) flattens out local differences. (Example: Everyone listening to the same 10 pop songs instead of regional music.)

Cultural Appropriation – Adopting elements of a culture (especially minorities) without respect or understanding—usually for profit or power. (Example: A business selling "Native American headdresses" as festival fashion.)

Digital Colonialism is a phenomenon in which large technology corporations, mainly from the United States or China, have immense power over how other cultures and societies are portrayed and perceived online. A good example of this is TikTok's algorithm, which has a bias towards and will often privilege English-language content over content created in minority languages.

Algorithmic Bias – Social media's automated systems preferring certain cultures over others. (Example: Instagram preferring Eurocentric standards of beauty.)

Viral Commodification – Reducing cultural practices to disposable trends for consumption. (Example: Sacred Hindu rituals being turned into "challenges" devoid of context.) Cultural Preservation (Digital) – Utilizing the internet to preserve threatened traditions. (Example: Apps that teach Indigenous languages or archive folk tales.)

Cultural Hybridity – When two or more cultures blend online, creating new mixed identities (e.g., K-pop inspired by hip-hop, or "Spanglish" memes).

Echo Chamber Effect – Social media isolates people in bubbles where only their own culture/views are reinforced, reducing cross-cultural understanding.

Digital Diaspora – Migrant communities using social media to stay connected to their home culture (e.g., Filipinos abroad bonding over TikTok traditions).

Platform Imperialism – Dominance of Western/U.S.-based apps (like Facebook) shaping how global cultures interact—often sidelining local platforms.

Memetic Culture – How ideas/viral content (memes, trends) spread and mutate online, sometimes trivializing serious cultural symbols.

Deepfake Culture – AI-generated content distorting cultural representation (e.g., fake "Indigenous" influencers or altered historical images).

Hashtag Activism – Using viral tags (#BlackLivesMatter, #StopAsianHate) to rally global awareness—but sometimes reducing complex issues to trends.

Algorithmic Folklore – Traditions that emerge specifically from platform algorithms (e.g., TikTok dances no single person "created," but everyone copies

5.3. Historical Background

5.3.1. Development of Social Media

The story of social media's impact on cultural identity reveals a profound evolution from simple communication tools to powerful architects of global culture. This transformation has unfolded through distinct yet interconnected stages, each introducing new dynamics in how The current algorithmic age has accelerated these changes to unprecedented levels. What began as simple sharing platforms have become complex ecosystems where cultural hybridity emerges spontaneously, often divorced from its original context. The same viral mechanisms that spread Harlem Shake globally now propel sacred dances into mainstream consciousness as decontextualized challenges. This cultural compression represents both the incredible connective potential and concerning reductionism inherent in modern platforms.

We now observe a paradoxical reality where social media simultaneously enables cultural preservation and facilitates cultural appropriation. Indigenous language tutorials thrive alongside AI-generated caricatures of traditional dress. Authentic cultural educators compete with algorithmically favored remixes that prioritize engagement over accuracy. This duality stems from fundamental platform designs that reward novelty and virality rather than depth and authenticity.

The transition from early internet communities to today's algorithm-driven platforms reveals crucial insights about cultural representation in digital spaces. Platform imperialism has emerged through the dominance of Western-designed networks that prioritize certain cultural expressions over others. Meanwhile, memetic culture spreads traditions at unprecedented speed while often stripping them of their original meaning. These developments raise critical questions about digital colonialism in an age where a handful of corporations mediate global cultural exchange.

As we stand at this crossroads, the challenge becomes clear: how to harness social media's connective power while safeguarding against its homogenizing tendencies. The solution may lie in reimagining platform governance to prioritize cultural sovereignty over engagement metrics. By understanding this historical trajectory - from decentralized beginnings to today's algorithmic curation - we gain the insight needed to shape a digital future that celebrates rather than flattens cultural diversity.

5.3.2.   The Roots of Connection

Prior to   Facebook likes and Instagram reels, the first flickers of online social interaction glowed silently through modems and code. It's a phenomenon that traces back to 1978, when tech geeks who were curious about the world around them first logged onto Bulletin Board Systems (or BBS, for the   cool kids). These primitive platforms, accessed through dial-up connections, provided the ability for people to send messages, share files, maybe even partake in a very basic, text-only   form of gaming. Primitive and local, by today's standards, but BBS communities were the seedlings of something far grander —   an online social network.

A couple of years later, in 1985, one of the first online communities was born: The WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic   Link). Based on a mission of shared intellectual curiosity and discussion, WELL provided the forum   where users could participate in live forums, watch discussions unfold or chime in on ongoing conversations. It wasn't slick, but it demonstrated there was an appetite for people to create their own communities in   the digital realm.

The next   huge leap came in 1991 when Tim Berners-Lee invented something called the World Wide Web. All at once, the internet ceased to be something only for researchers and programmers; instead, it was a networked, navigable web of information accessible to   everyone.

5.3.3.   The Rise of the Online Identity

Almost in an instant, the need arose to rewrite this composition.Even by 2003, when broadband came in, computer users could not only access any information they wanted and link up with it both immediately and conveniently. Instead, the platforms of the '90s began to sprout the fruits that would later come to define an entire generation.Public, Everybody is living on the Web now. MatchingIn 2002, Friendster showed up and it was able to gather millions of users in a short period of time. The notion of "a circle of friends and he who has some" was introduced as they asked users to build their own personal networks. Eventually, though it had problems in scraping up enough servers and could not keep pace with growth, Friendster demonstrated people were ready to take their social lives onto the Internet.

Then, in 2003, MySpace raised its head with a wild and personalized style. It allowed users to adorn their profiles with photos, music and background images, in a sense turning internet bedrooms. Soon, it turned into a fad, particularly with bands and teenagers, reaching the top placed and most visited social networking site in the country.

Next year LinkedIn took a completely different angle. Instead of informal friendship and self-realization, it was a place for professional groups to rub shoulders--their home. LinkedIn was where you went to get good headhunted and found out to whom one should show one's resume, but this also began marking what social media could be about in general.Then 2004 saw a turning point with the founding of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg, only two years after he quit Harvard. Dawson's Creek gent has taught me all I know about romantic love and betrayal: people just believe that. Don't you think the story is somewhat similar to a book constructed natively?

What was originally just a place for college students quickly turned universal, taking the simplicity and real-name culture into social networks. With a combination of design, reality-based identities and an increasing array of features (like the iconic "like" button), Facebook started reversing game rules.

In the same year, in 2005 YouTube was launched. People began watching video-sharing become mainstream and recognized that today anyone with a camera or internet connection could send their images out into public view. Here was a sea change for it wasn't only about connecting anymore - but producing.The year 2006 saw Twitter emerge with its distinctive brevity feature. Twitter's 140-character restriction enabled users to share immediate updates while focusing on news dissemination. Everyday users transformed into microbloggers while the platform evolved into an influential communication tool that supported activism and viral trend creation.

The online realm transformed from a mere endpoint into a mirror of everyday existence by this era's conclusion. The phase of social media as a test platform had ended while it transitioned into the accepted standard.

5.3.4.   The Golden Age of the Social Media

By 2007, social media wasn't just this fun little toy anymore—it was slowly taking over everything. What started out as a way to poke your college buddies or stalk your ex turned into, well, an international circus where politics, pop culture, and advertising all bumped elbows. Wild times.Then came the iPhone. Man, that was a plot twist. Suddenly, the whole internet fits right in your back pocket. No more being chained to the family computer in the living room. You could snap a pic of your breakfast, roast someone on Twitter, or doom scroll Facebook while pretending to listen in class. Anywhere, anytime.

Facebook saw the writing on the wall and sprinted with it. Between 2008 and 2012, the thing just exploded. It wasn't just about profiles anymore—they threw in the News Feed (hello, endless scrolling), Timeline, and let third-party apps join the party. It basically turned into the digital equivalent of a shopping mall where you could gossip, read the news, or crush candy for hours.Twitter? That became the global megaphone. Who knew 140 characters could cause such chaos? Beef between celebs, politicians airing dirty laundry, news breaking faster than cable could keep up. The Arab Spring? People literally organized revolutions in real time. Pretty wild when you think about it.

And then Instagram showed up in 2010, all artsy and obsessed with filters. Suddenly, everyone was a photographer, or at least acted like one. Influencers popped up out of nowhere, showing off avocado toast, sunsets, and their best angles. Travel, food, fashion—it was all there, perfectly curated and kinda addictive.

Snapchat, not wanting to be left out, slid into the scene in 2011 with disappearing messages and Stories that vanished in a day. Teens loved it—finally, a way to send weird selfies without worrying about them haunting you forever. Honestly, it made texting feel kinda old school.

Meanwhile, over on YouTube, regular folks were turning into overnight celebrities. Vloggers, gamers, makeup gurus—you name it. YouTube wasn't just a place for cat videos anymore. Suddenly, you could make a living (or at least try) from your bedroom with a ring light and some charisma.By 2015? Forget novelty—social media was the real deal. It was practically stitched into daily life. Friendships, political movements, memes, brand drama—it all played out online for the whole world to see. Those platforms? Straight-up juggernauts now.

5.3.5.   The Algorithm Era and Today's Challenges

Some people are calling the 2010s the decade of "Algorithm Era." During this time, social media was AI driven meaning content was picked for users based on algorithms that calculated engagement potential. The algorithms ensured Western values and culture dominated feeds while sidelining minority traditions and values. Inappropriate content almost always won in practice. Because of the bare minimum configuration of automated moderation systems, traditional tribal clothing resulted in being flagged as nudity, meaning susceptible immodest AI lacked industry understanding context erasure led to erasure of pertinent culture.

Boardrooms marked social media platforms as cultural and civilizational frontiers for profits uncovering the meager frameworks guaranteeing users' access for recurrence flagged civil rights.

5.3.6.   Digital Shift Commences

During the early 2000s, the development of social media was in progress, while global institutions were still trying to understand the ramifications of these technologies on human rights. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube came into existence with a lot of reckless abandon. The people were amazed at the unprecedented chance to exchange thoughts, customs, and id along with traditions around the globe. But exciting as it was, there were some important issues to consider.
Freedom of expression gave birth to the "cancelling" phenomenon, and almost immediately, friction set in. Activists, as well as minority voices, were systematically suppressed and silenced through community reporting, shadow bans, or vague moderation policies.

Misinformation or cultural misrepresentation began as little-known dangers. Sacred dances were turned into viral sensations, while traditional music was remixed without credit or context.The global cultural expression policies were not normalized, hence there was no international law which governed how social media was using culture. The legal system was lagging behind when compared with the media.

5.3.7.   United Nations Speaks Out

In 2021, "The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights" (OHCHR) released a landmark report which turned many heads. It provided an alarming and shocking report:Technological advancements in tools of Artificial Intelligence (AI) were utilized to neutralize, stereotype, and surveil populations.

Facial recognition and predictive profiling social policing was executed to a great degree over ethnic minorities and protestors.

Automated prescription systems related to immigration, social welfare, and content visibility have a high probability of infringing on fundamental identity and dignity principles.

For the very first time in history a body of the United Nations system has officially connected social media platforms' algorithms and AI systems to a deep-rooted framework of human rights abuse and violation.

In the same year, UNESCO introduced the world's first international AI ethics framework endorsed by 193 nations. It highlighted:

Prioritization of cultural diversity ahead of algorithmic efficiency.

Transparency—users must know whether their viewed content is influenced by AI.Holding tech companies accountable—they should not be allowed to profit off of cultural exploitation.This was pioneering in recognizing tech is not separate from culture—and human rights must be secured online as well.

As technology moves ahead of regulations, the big question is: How can social media be set up to serve the public good instead of just making money? And how can we protect basic rights, the quality of information, and democratic values in this fast-changing digital world?

5.4. Actions Taken Regarding the Issue

5.4.1. International Actions

5.4.1.1. UNESCO

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005):

This convention was adopted before modern social media existed, but increasing use of digital platforms has seen the convention interpreted in the context of social media. The Convention encourages member states to protect and promote diverse cultural content on digital platforms.

In the 2021 "Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity" Report:

UNESCO called out how digital platforms (including social media) impact cultural diversity and identity. It called for fairer algorithms, local content prominence, and stronger cultural governance.

5.4.1.2. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Digital Rights reports provided by UNHRC for period (2020–2023):

The UN has stressed the Article 27 right to take part in culture, and stated that algorithmically-driven content creates risks to cultures of the marginalized/minorities. The UN also called members states and platforms to make sure platforms have fair representation of culture and languages in digital spaces.

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005):

This convention was adopted before modern social media existed, but increasing use of digital platforms has seen the convention interpreted in the context of social media. The Convention encourages member states to protect and promote diverse cultural content on digital platforms.

In the 2021 "Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity" Report:

UNESCO called out how digital platforms (including social media) impact cultural diversity and identity. It called for fairer algorithms, local content prominence, and stronger cultural governance.

5.4.1.3.   European Union

Digital Services Act (2022):

Requires greater transparency around algorithms and content moderation for larger platforms. Seeks to stimulate the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, and requires platforms to assess the societal impact of their content systems.

European Commission Media Literacy Work:

The EU funds projects and research aimed at fostering critical media literacy that enable users - particularly youth - to engage with cultural content, and to resist stereotyping or misinformation.

5.5.   Major Parties Involved

5.5.1.   Canada

Online Streaming Act (Bill C-11) (2023):

Requires platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Netflix to promote Canadian content, which includes Indigenous media and content in French.

Intention: Protect Canadian cultural identity from being engulfed by dominant international media.

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC):

Oversight of how online platforms must give back to local cultural industries.

5.5.2.   Australia

Online Safety Act (2021):

Provides for removal of content that might be harmful to cultural groups including Indigenous communities.

Promotes digital literacy initiatives that help young people engage with cultural diversity in an online setting.

Australian Content Quotas (currently under review):

Proposes potential regulations which may affect streaming services to require more local (Australian) content.

5.5.3.   France

Toubon Law Enforcement in Digital Media:

France is enforcing the French language on online platforms, and in the media to prevent cultural and linguistic loss.

Financial Support for Francophone Content Creators:

There is grant funding for creators that are promoting French culture and identity through social media.

5.5.4. Germany

NetzDG Law (2017):

While primarily aimed at hate speech, it has repercussions for content that also marginalizes minority cultures.

Advances a more civil digital public sphere, and the goal is to create social cohesion and cultural tolerance.

5.5.5. India

Promotion of Regional Languages Online:

India also finances initiatives to promote content in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, etc., on platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

Digital India Programme:

Includes initiatives that digitize and promote the wide-ranging heritage, universality and diversity of India's cultures on social media.

5.5.6. South Korea

Cultural Export Strategy (Hallyu/K-Wave):

South Korea leverages social media platforms to globally promote Korean culture (music, fashion, food, etc.).

Content regulation for foreign platforms:

Requires platforms to carry local content and respect cultural sensitivity guidelines.

5.5.7.   Brazil

Support for Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian Digital Projects:

Funding and platforms are provided to amplify underrepresented cultural voices on social media.

Digital Literacy Initiatives:

Helping rural and Indigenous communities access social media to preserve and share culture.

5.5.8.   Mexico

National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI):

Works with social platforms to create digital content in Indigenous languages and combat online cultural marginalization.

5.5.9.   South Africa

Heritage Month Digital Campaigns:

Government partnered with influencers to support annual digital campaigns promoting local customs and cultural values online.

Cybercrimes Act, 2021:

The cyber legislation contained protections in the form of content that could incite cultural hatred or damage cultural dignity.

5.5.10. Japan

Support for Cultural Creators Online:

The government funds anime, historical documentaries, and traditional arts that thrive on YouTube and social platforms.
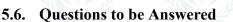
5.5.11. Nigeria

Regulation of Social Media for National Unity:

While controversial, Nigeria has attempted to regulate platforms to prevent disinformation that could fuel ethnic or cultural division.
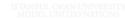
5.6.   Questions to be Answered

- To what extent does social media impact the cultural identity and self-expression of minority and Indigenous communities?

- How can states ensure that social media promotes cultural diversity while preventing cultural homogenization or erasure?

- What measures can the international community take to prevent cultural appropriation and the misrepresentation of cultures on digital platforms?

- Should governments be permitted to regulate social media content in the name of protecting national cultural identity, and how can this be balanced with freedom of expression?

- What role should social media companies play in safeguarding cultural rights and promoting ethical digital cultural exchange?

- How can the UN support efforts to protect endangered languages and traditions through digital and social media platforms?

- What strategies can be implemented to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented cultures in global digital narratives?

- How do algorithm-driven platforms affect the visibility and representation of non-dominant cultures?

- Can international legal frameworks be created or expanded to protect cultural identity in the digital space?

- How can education and digital literacy be improved to help users, especially youth, critically engage with cultural content on social media?

6.   Bibliography

1.   boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens. Yale University Press.https:// yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300166316/its-complicated*

2.   Brookings Institution. (2022). *Social media and the global spread of pop culture.https:// www.brookings.edu/articles/social-media-and-the-global-spread-of-pop-culture*

3.   Castells, M. (2010). *The power of identity (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.https://www.wiley.com/en-us/ The+Power+of+Identity%2C+2nd+Edition-p-9781405196871*

4.   European Commission. (2022). *The Digital Services Act package.https://digital- strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act-package*

5.   International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (n.d.). *How social media shapes our understanding of culture.https://www.ifla.org/news/how-social-media-shapes-our- understanding-of-culture*

6.   Pew Research Center. (2023). *Social media use in 2023.https://www.pewresearch.org/ internet/2023/05/17/social-media-use-in-2023*

7.   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2020). *The impact of social media on youth cultural identity.https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/news/2020/02/social-media-cultural -identity*

8.   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2003). *Recommen- dation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace.https:// unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000129728*

9.   United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR). (2021). *The right to privacy in the digital age: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/ HRC/48/31).https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4831-right-privacy-digital-age*

10. Journal of Communication & Media Studies. (Various issues). *Articles on digital media, cultural globalization, and identity formation.https://cgscholar.com/community/cgjournal/journal-of- communication-and-media-studies*

11. United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR). (2021). *The right to privacy in the digital age (A/HRC/48/31).* https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4831-right-privacy-digital-age

12. UNESCO. (2021). *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137

13. European Commission. (2024). *Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act).* https://artificialintelligenceact.eu

14. UK Government. (2021). *National AI Strategy.* https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-ai-strategy

15. German Federal Government. (2019). *AI Strategy of the German Federal Government.* https://www.ki-strategie-deutschland.de/home.html

16. U.S. White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). (2022). *Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights.* https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/ai-bill-of-rights

17. Future of Life Institute. (2017). *Asilomar AI Principles.* https://futureoflife.org/ai-principles

18. Amnesty International. (2021). *Surveillance Giants: How the Business Model of Google and Facebook Threatens Human Rights.* https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/1404/2019/en

19. Council of Europe. (2020). *Guidelines on Artificial Intelligence and Data Protection.* https://www.coe.int/en/web/data-protection/guidelines-on-artificial-intelligence

20. World Economic Forum. (2023). *AI Governance Alliance: Responsible AI Toolkit.* https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/wef-responsible-ai-toolkit

21. United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR). (2021). *The right to privacy in the digital age (A/HRC/48/31).*
https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4831-right-privacy-digital-age