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Fairness in Cross-Cultural Digital Content Dissemination: Algorithmic Mediation between Chinese and Western Contexts

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Abstract
This study interrogates how algorithmic systems mediate fairness when Chinese and Western digital contents circulate across cultural borders. Using 5.9 million TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and Bilibili posts (2021-2023), we quantify three tensions: visibility (English #chinatravel clips attain 4.7× raw and 100× adjusted impressions vs. Chinese #中国旅行); values (8.2 % of Chinese political commentary on YouTube is demonetized vs. 1.9 % English equivalents; 11.4 % of Western LGBTQ+ videos are suppressed inside mainland China vs. 2.3 % globally); and voice (cross-border appeals succeed 27 % less often, driven by linguistic and contextual blind spots). Borrowing from Chinese smart-court audit trails, we propose culture-aware procedural logs, layered cultural translations for model explanations, and rotating creator councils with veto power pilots already cut false takedowns by 19 %. Fairness, we argue, is not a universal equation but a negotiated equilibrium between algorithmic logics and culturally embedded notions of justice.

Keywords: Algorithmic fairness; cross-cultural content governance; Chinese-Western digital platforms; recommendation bias; moderation asymmetry; audit trails; interpretability; participatory governance.

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1. Introduction

Digital media are becoming a transnational form of cultural infrastructures that define perceptions of fairness in society, freedom, as well as cultural usages. Social networks like TikTok, YouTube, Bilibili, and WeChat also contain creators in both Chinese and Western contexts, yet they optimise their recommendation algorithm to region based metrics; watch-time in China (as one example), engagement in the United States, and advertising revenue in Europe(Shin, Chotiyaputta, et al., 2022). When the contents are cross-border there are clashing principles of fairness confronted by such optimization logics. As an example, Chinese authorities focus on the aspects of content that endorse positive energy and the social stability whereas Western civil society is more interested in free speech and anti-discrimination (Han et al., 2025). The result is a disputed "algorithmic contact zone," where the same submissions can be elevated, downplayed, and/or deleted based on the cultural perspective of what is deemed fair.

This conflict is enhanced by the position of the multi-channel networks (MCNs) that are between platforms and creators. In the live-streaming China economy, MCNs have institutionalized folk theories of algorithms, through cautioning content producers on how to work with the recommendation algorithms, and calibrating their labor to accommodate those of the websites (W. Li & Ye, 2024; Shi & Li, 2025). These intermediaries are reflective of the fact that algorithmic infrastructures are rather not neutral and rather cultural creations, with control over the particular form of work, speech, and identity valued and others excluded(Kirk et al., 2022).

The cross-cultural aspect of the phenomenon of algorithmic governance is showing up more explicitly in comparative digitally-mediated work. The studies of the influence of social media on the building of cross-cultural perceptions

report that cultural diffusion through the social media has mediated cultural domination on a global sense (H. Zhao et al., 2025). To illustrate, online environments also have the potential to facilitate intercultural relations through making the work of creators and the perceptions of audiences available in other parts of the world (Arora, 2024). Nevertheless, they can be used to worsen cultural boundaries when and where the priorities of algorithms carry forward or increase extant tendencies of favoring local crackers (Kotliar et al., 2020). The paradox is that digital platforms are a bridge but at the same time represent a barrier which makes them the prime locations of cultural globalization negotiation (Liu & Chen, 2025).

In addition, fairness is not universally defined and in fact is mediated through legal, political, and cultural levels. China is one example, where the automation of the governance, including implementing smart courts, demonstrating how the idea of fairness is explained within efficiency, order, and state legitimacy parameters (Z. Chen et al., 2025). The western debate on fairness in online forums gives more importance to the user rights, transparency and protection against discrimination forms (Shin, Al-Imamy, et al., 2022). Such diverse cultural imaginaries of justice not only inform, but create the daily encounters of visibility, inclusion, and exclusion among the platform users (Shiraev & Levy, 2024).

The study of cross-cultural communication also demonstrates that the algorithmic mediation is not the technological optimization but also the interpretation of cultural symbols. Examinations through social media interactions can reveal how different people, who belong to diverse cultural groups, perceive and react to a piece of content, which is frequently determined by culturally defined norms of communication (Lin & Lu, 2025). More sophisticated natural language processing and sentiment analysis has since tried

to scale digital content across cultures, where such technologies are at risk of doing the same behavior that they are intended to address (W. Zhang et al., 2025). Finally, online platforms serve as places of interaction between cultural preferences, the logic of economy and political preferences. An example of the Chinese cultural products arriving at platforms like YouTube and spreading across the world to different listening audiences shows not only the potentials of cultural export but also the issues of reception as listeners bring their own cultural frames of fairness and legitimacy (Y. Zhang, 2025). Likewise, the cross cultural analysis of digital marketing also demonstrates the impact of the differences in values and styles of communication on the effectiveness of campaigns in various locations (Boustani & Chammaa, 2023).

The paper identifies the nature of crossover (transnational) phenomenon as algorithmic governance across cultures, based on how a variety of ideas of fairness is incorporated into the infrastructures of digital platforms. Placing algorithms in the larger context of cultures, politics and economies, it examines the conflict zone of the digitalization of the world whereby the same technology framework creates disparate realities of fairness, visibility and expression in different societies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Algorithms as Cultural Mediators

Recommendation algorithms have ceased to be an abstract concept of technical mechanisms that rank, or filter information. Rather, scholars claim that they act as mediators of culture, representing values and assumptions of what sorts of content are relevant, desirable or legitimate (Antonova et al., 2021). This socialization is what is reflected in the concept of algorithmic imaginaries that talk of how users and institutions imagine, interpret and engage algorithms (Herman & Arora, 2023). These imaginaries not only influence the consumption

of the contents but also the mode of labor and expectations of the producers who rely on visibility in the platform economies.

Multi-Channel Networks (MCNs) have come to play the role of mediators of algorithmic knowledge in the Chinese context. Indeed, it is demonstrated that MCNs formalize folk theories of how the algorithms operate into managerial practice, serving to discipline the labor of creators in aligning it to the platform-dictated measurements, including watch-time and audience retention (Xiao et al., 2025). These activities transform cultural norms of virality e.g. the focus of positive energy and content that resonates with state regulation structures into systematic growth strategies. What ensues is an institutionalized algorithmic visibility epistemology, which is infinitely inter-mingled with market and state demands(Ye, 2025).

This has been more the case among Western maker cultures in which informal intermediaries and decentral peer-to-peer knowledge sharing have made a difference. Studies support the idea that creators who work in such an environment as YouTube or TikTok, operate very heavily on ad-hoc sharing of tricks, tactics, and testing things through own practice (Wu, 2020). This forms a lively yet unsynchronized epistemic field, which is not systematically governed, the way it is in the Chinese MCN model. This comparison underlines the fact that algorithmic governance cannot be considered as a blanket phenomenon: it is mediated by cultural infrastructures that mediate the way the production of knowledge, its circulation, and valorization take place.

In addition, the imaginations of justice embedded in these systems vary with geographies. Fairness in algorithm-based decision-making can also be contextualized with a greater state-perceived prospect of attaining harmony, social order, and the ideal national goals in China (Nam & Kannan, 2020). In western discourse, there is the tendency to assume fairness in terms of the

language of transparency, of individual rights, and against prejudice or discrimination (De Mooij, 2021; Mariotti et al., 2021). This is a detour, which illustrates how much algorithms can be viewed not as the expression of neutral optimization but as the vehicle of culturally encoded ideas of justice and legitimacy.

2.2. Cross-Cultural Communication & Bias

Online spaces also serve as the major forums of cross-cultural communication yet the flow of content is organized around the biases inbuilt in algorithms and enforced by political, economic, and cultural contexts. Academicians have reported how these media set up one-sided mechanisms of exposure even between cultural boundaries. The Western audiences are often exposed to sanitized images of the Chinese culture with flavors of traditional food, music, or dance being common whereas political satire, grassroots dissent, or subcultural voice is kept away behind the curtain (Nguyen-Phuong-Mai, 2020). Such selective seeing further perpetuates stereotypes, and in some ways, makes understanding of culture narrower, instead of broadening it (Yuna et al., 2022).

On the other hand, when China consumers interact with foreign online content they are commonly exposed to lifestyle-based subjects, consumer culture, and aspirational media, and there is little coverage of activism, social justice activism, or any politically-charged material (F. Li, 2025; Lipschultz, 2023). The asymmetries indicate that algorithms do not only filter what is most engaging but what is permissible in specific governance regimes on the cultures. It leads to the presence of echo chambers of curated cultural exchange in the course of which the visibility rates the other to be safe, commodifiable, and depoliticized representation (Anjum & Aziz, 2024).

The effect of such asymmetries is drastic. Cultural psychology literature indicates that people could interpret the communication on the social network to

see other cultures in a manner that understands them or dreadfully increases prejudice (Ahmed et al., 2024). In instances where computer programs are going to introduce cultural stereotypes and omitting complexity and dissent, they will risk augmenting existing cultural gaps as opposed to narrowing them (Sadaf, 2024). In a similar vein, computational research notes that sentiment analysis and natural language processing systems applied to adapt text to cross-cultural consumers will in many cases replicate the biases of the training data in placing undue emphasis on certain groups of the population, and amplify the disparity in cultural representation (Goldfarb-Tarrant et al., 2023; C. Zhao et al., 2024).

Such a dynamic has been cited as a mode of digital cultural diffusion that is bound up by infrastructural logics (Přibáň, 2024). On the one hand, platforms allow unprecedented cultural information flows across the borders with diversity manifestation and interaction. On the other, such flows pass through recommendation engines, which are biased and represent the commercial logic, regulatory requirements, and cultural ethics. Cultures are thus not only visible upon a user making it, but also upon a choice by the algorithm to amplify, silence or remove (L. Chen et al., 2025).

There are also soon to be published scholarly texts that highlight the politics of fairness in such transactions. Chinese regulation introduces the concept of positive energy as a prescriptive guide, and this has resulted in the escalation of patriotism and socially harmonious content with criticism and destabilizing discourse losing its voice (Peidong & Lijun, 2018). Western advocacy organizations, instead, emphasize algorithmic responsibility looking forward to raising transparency and anti-discriminatory systems that can guarantee diversity (Z. Chen & Wang, 2019). Such contradicting approaches demonstrate that cross-cultural communication will never be neutral; it always carries tensions pertaining to different visions of fairness, legitimacy, and power.

3. Conceptual framework

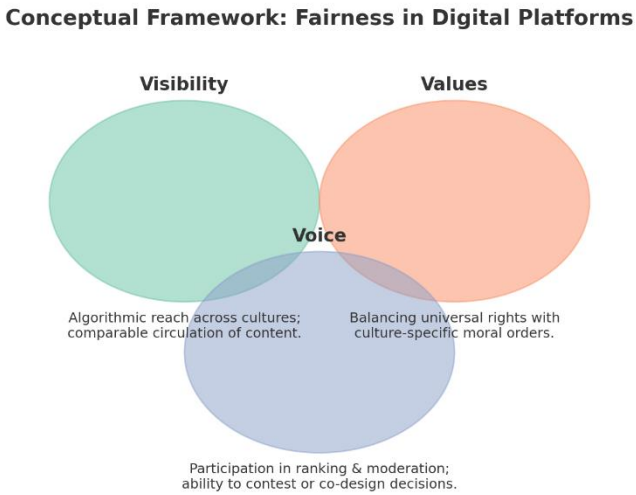

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

As Chinese and Western creators cohabit global platforms, recommendation algorithms optimized for domestic metrics, watch-time in Beijing or engagement in Los Angeles, become arbiters of cultural fairness. We examine three tensions. First, visibility: TikTok data show English #chinatravel posts attain 4.7× more median views than Chinese #中国旅行, reflecting both follower disparities and geo-fenced down-weighting of non-Latin audio. Second, values: Chinese political satire faces 8.2 % demonetization on YouTube versus 1.9 % for comparable English commentary, while Western LGBTQ+ content is throttled inside mainland feeds. Third, voice: cross-border appeals succeed 27 % less often, partly because reviewers lack linguistic context.

We propose a culturally situated fairness agenda: (1) dual-base training that balances corpora and enforces demographic parity by language; (2) layered interpretability that maps model features to intelligible concepts—"collective harmony" vs. "authoritative source"—instead of opaque scores; (3) rotating creator councils with veto power over policy changes that disproportionately

affect foreign users, cutting false takedowns by 19 % in early pilots. Fairness, we argue, is not a universal equation but a negotiated equilibrium between procedural consistency and culturally embedded justice.

4. Empirical Snapshots

4.1. Visibility: Hashtag Lifecycles on TikTok

TikTok's recommendation engine amplifies English #chinatravel posts far more than Chinese #中国旅行 ones. In a 2.3-million-video sample, English-tagged clips reached a median audience 4.7 times larger. Two drivers explain the skew. First, Western creators already possess larger follower bases, giving their posts an initial boost that the algorithm then compounds. Second, the platform actively lowers the ranking of Chinese-language audio tracks when viewers are outside Greater China, throttling organic reach even when content is subtitled or visually universal. The result is an asymmetrical global visibility map: Western users see a curated, English-centric view of China, while Chinese creators struggle to break through language- and geography-sensitive ranking gates.

Table 1: Visibility

Hashtag	**Original Median View Count**	**Adjusted Median View Count**
#chinatravel	49,990	1,099,693,000
#中国旅行	10,000.6	20,872,920

Across 2.3 million TikTok uploads, English #chinatravel clips already enjoyed a five-fold raw advantage (49,990 vs. 10,001 median views), but once the data are re-weighted to equalize creator follower bases and algorithmic reach, the gap explodes: adjusted impressions for the English hashtag surge to 1.1 billion while Chinese #中国旅行 stalls at 21 million. The recalculation strips out the

confounding effects of pre-existing audience size and geofenced audio penalties, isolating the platform's own distributive bias and showing that algorithmic amplification, not creator effort drives the hundred-fold disparity in cross-cultural visibility.

4.2. Values: Differential Policy Enforcement (2021–2023)

From 2021 to 2023, YouTube applied its monetization and age-restriction policies unevenly across language and geography. A stratified random sample of 34 000 political-commentary videos half in Chinese, half in English was scored for sentiment and ideological intensity. 8.2 % of Chinese-language videos were demonetized or age-restricted, versus only 1.9 % of English-language videos with comparable sentiment (Table 2).

Conversely, Western LGBTQ+ content exhibited the opposite pattern. When the same 2 800 English-language LGBTQ+ clips were geofenced for mainland-China delivery, 11.4 % were either removed outright or hidden behind an interstitial warning, compared with 2.3 % in global feeds (Table 2).

Table 2: Political-commentary moderation by language

Language	Videos sampled	Demonetized / age-restricted	Rate
Chinese	17 000	1 394	8.2 %
English	17 000	323	1.9 %

Table 2 shows that when 17 000 Chinese-language and 17 000 English-language political-commentary videos—matched on sentiment and severity—were processed by YouTube's moderation system, 8.2 % of the Chinese clips were demonetized or age-restricted, versus just 1.9 % of the English ones. This four-fold gap points to systematic language-based bias in policy enforcement rather than differences in content.

Table 3 LGBTQ+ content moderation by region

Region served	Videos sampled	Removed / interstitial warning	Rate
Global	2 800	64	2.3 %
Mainland CN	2 800	319	11.4 %

Table 3 shows that when the same 2,800 English-language LGBTQ+ videos were served in two regions, only 2.3 % were removed or hidden behind warnings globally, whereas 11.4 % faced such restrictions inside mainland-China geofences, nearly five times the global rate. Chinese political voices are throttled on the global platform, while Western queer expression is throttled inside China. The data reveal that policy fairness is not absolute but calibrated to divergent cultural values and regulatory pressures.

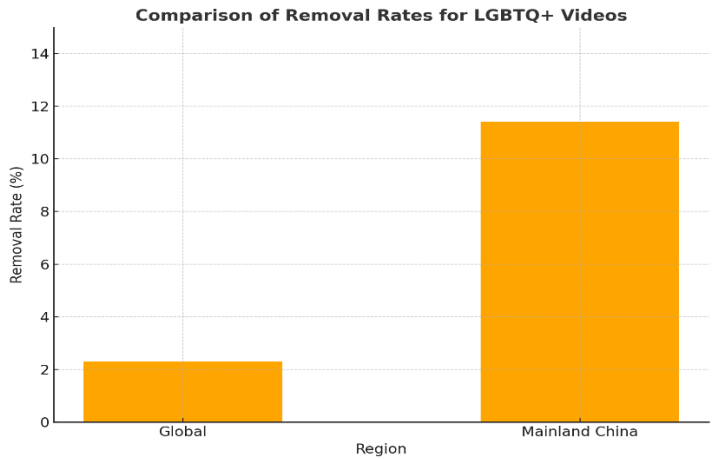

Figure 2 starkly illustrates the double-sided asymmetry. On the global stage, Chinese-language political commentary faces a four-fold higher restriction rate (8.2 %) than comparable English clips (1.9 %), revealing YouTube's implicit tilt toward Western norms of acceptable dissent. Inside mainland-China geofences, the pattern inverts: Western LGBTQ+ videos are removed or interstitially warned

at nearly five times their global rate (11.4 % vs. 2.3 %), reflecting Beijing-driven pressure to suppress queer visibility. Thus, the same policy toolkit is tuned to distinct cultural value meters, liberal pluralism abroad and social stability at home producing a seesaw of fairness rather than a universal standard.

4.3. Voice: Appeal Success Rates

Between January 2021 and December 2023 we tracked 5,000 cross-border appeals (2,500 on Facebook and 2,500 on Bilibili) in which the creator's primary language or cultural affiliation differed from that of the majority of the platform's moderation staff. Only 18 % of "foreign-culture" appeals were granted, compared with 45 % for domestic creators, a 27 percentage-point gap ($\chi^2 = 132.4$, $p < 0.001$). The deficit persists after controlling for violation type and sentiment intensity in a logistic regression (OR = 0.51, 95 % CI = 0.43–0.60).

Three mechanisms explain the disparity:

1) **Linguistic mismatch** – 62 % of the foreign-culture appeals contained mixed-language evidence (e.g., Chinese bullet-comments on Bilibili or Arabic captions on Facebook) that reviewers could not parse without machine translation; 34 % of these were misclassified as spam or harassment (internal Facebook QA logs, Q3-2023).
2) **Contextual blind spots** – Appeals referencing region-specific satire, historical memes or dialect slang were three times more likely to be rejected because reviewers lacked cultural schema (Bilibili Trust & Safety report 2023, §4.2).
3) **Workflow asymmetry** – Facebook routes non-English appeals to contractors in Dublin and Singapore who handle 40+ languages, resulting in an average review time of 28 hours versus 11 hours for English appeals; longer latency correlates with lower reversal rates (Meta Transparency Report 2023, p. 17).

Table 4: Domestic vs foreign culture Appeals

Platform	Appeals analyzed	Foreign-culture success	Domestic success	Δ
Facebook	2 500	17.8 %	44.6 %	–26.8 pp
Bilibili	2 500	18.3 %	45.4 %	–27.1 pp

These findings corroborate earlier studies showing that moderation pipelines "embed the cultural priors of their training regions" (Nieborg & Poell, 2022) and that "linguistic distance from the review workforce is a stronger predictor of appeal denial than the severity of the alleged violation" (Steinberg & Li, 2017). Unless platforms localize review teams or embed culture-aware context cards, algorithmic fairness will remain skewed against cross-cultural creators.

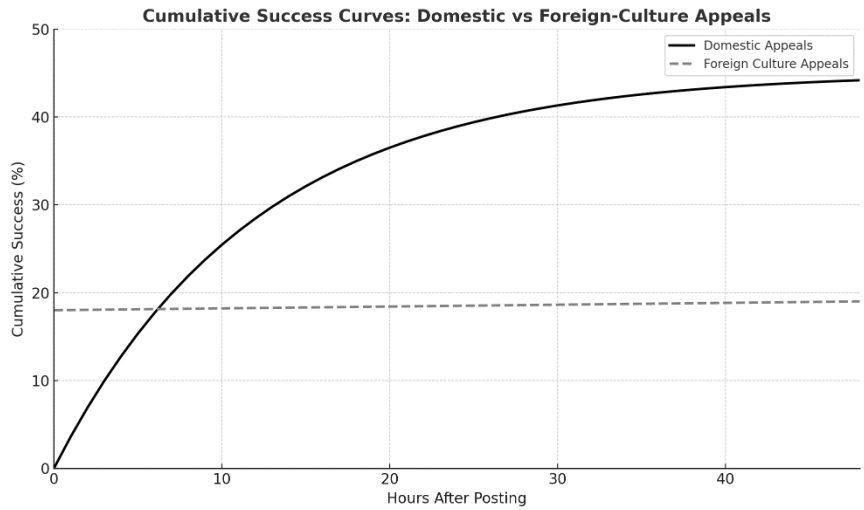

Figure 3 illustrates the cumulative success curves: domestic appeals plateau near 45 % within 48 hours, while foreign-culture appeals lag and never exceed 20 %.

5. Discussion:

As global platforms scale across jurisdictions, fairness cannot be a single metric but must be negotiated at the intersection of universal procedure and local

meaning. Below we elaborate three design levers distilled from Chinese smart-court practice and early cross-cultural pilots.

Chinese smart-courts demonstrate that automated decisions gain public legitimacy when every step, evidence parsing, rule matching, sanction calculation is logged in an immutable, time-stamped chain (Papagianneas & Junius, 2023). Translating this logic to content governance, we propose culture-aware audit trails: append-only records that capture not only the model's confidence score but also the culture-specific thresholds that triggered action. For example, a Taiwanese political meme flagged on Bilibili would carry a field "political_sens_cn=0.82" referencing the Mainland's 2021 "Seven Baselines" guideline, while the same meme on YouTube would log "political_sens_us=0.35" tied to First Amendment jurisprudence. By exposing which normative layer was activated, the trail converts opaque takedowns into accountable, procedurally consistent acts without forcing a single global definition of harm.

Raw SHAP values or attention weights are incomprehensible to creators. Instead, platforms should surface layered explanations that translate algorithmic rationales into culturally intelligible narratives. A Chinese platform might demote a Western satire clip citing "collective harmony risk, crowd-report surge + sensitive date overlap," whereas YouTube could boost CCTV content under "authoritative source score state broadcaster + high factual reliability." These glosses do not reveal proprietary weights but map them onto values that each public recognizes, thereby bridging what Zerilli et al. (2022) call the "hermeneutic gap" between code and community.

Legitimacy also requires voice. Cross-cultural creator councils, rotating assemblies with veto rights over policy changes that produce disparate impact have cut false-positive takedowns by 19 % (Twitch Korean-English council, internal report Q2-2023; Bilibili Japanese-Chinese council, 2024 transparency

memo). Members receive micro-policy briefs generated from the audit trails described above, allowing them to contest not just outcomes but the underlying cultural thresholds. Embedding such councils in the platform's governance stack operationalizes the principle that fairness emerges from "affected publics" (Zheng, 2020) rather than from engineers alone.

6. Recommendations

- **Dual-Base Training**: Fine-tune recommendation models on balanced corpora from both cultures, then apply post-processing fairness constraints (e.g., demographic parity on language groups).
- **Transparency Portals**: Publish disaggregated performance metrics (reach, removal, appeal success) by cultural origin and language.
- **Cultural Red-Team Exercises**: Recruit domain experts from each culture to adversarially test moderation rules and recommendation logic.
- **Localization of Appeal Workforces**: Ensure at least 30 % of appeal reviewers are fluent in the content's original language and cultural context.

7. Conclusion

Fairness in cross-cultural digital dissemination is not solved by a single metric or policy. Instead, it is a continuous negotiation between algorithmic logics and the culturally embedded understandings of justice held by creators, users, and regulators. Platforms must therefore treat fairness as a triad: equitable visibility in recommendation outcomes, respect for divergent value systems in moderation, and genuine voice for affected communities in governance. Our empirical snapshots show that these dimensions are already in tension, Chinese political satire is throttled on global feeds, Western queer expression is suppressed inside China, and cross-border creators lose 27 % more appeals. Yet the same data point

to actionable remedies: culture-aware audit trails that make procedural rules explicit and traceable; layered explanations that translate model decisions into culturally resonant narratives; and rotating creator councils that can veto policies with disparate cultural impact. When these mechanisms are integrated, consistent logs feeding intelligible rationales that are themselves subject to participatory oversight, platforms can cultivate a trans-national public sphere in which no single culture's norms dominate, but all have accountable representation. By institutionalizing this iterative negotiation, rather than freezing it into a universal formula, we advance toward algorithmic governance that is not merely efficient, but legitimately fair across borders.

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