

## Facebook and Google are doomed, billionaire George Soros says

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Billionaire George Soros speaks during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 25, 2018. (Photo by Simon Dawson, Bloomberg News)

George Soros, the billionaire philanthropist and leading donor to liberal causes, predicts that regulation and taxation will soon dethrone [Facebook](#) and [Google](#). He described the [technology](#) industry's major players as powerful monopolies that harm individuals, market innovation and democracy.

In a wide-ranging, scathing speech delivered Thursday (Jan. 25) at a dinner event at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Soros applauded the European Union's heightened enforcement aimed at web giants. He also called for greater regulation of the tech companies, seizing on a growing backlash against Silicon Valley.

"Facebook and Google have grown into ever more powerful monopolies. They have become obstacles to innovation. And they have caused a variety of problems of which we are only now beginning to become aware," he said, according to a transcript of the speech.



[How Facebook's latest changes will affect your news feed](#)

[Facebook announced it is making major changes to the social network.](#)

Google would not comment on his remarks. Facebook did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Soros gave his speech as officials in Washington and industry critics continued to ramp up their scrutiny of the tech sector. That pressure has been directed at a broad array of issues, perhaps most prominently online advertising and the spread of

disinformation on popular social media platforms.

In response, Facebook and Google have said they are open to greater government oversight in their ad operations. But Facebook has gone even further in recent weeks, publicly grappling with its role in global society. Last week Facebook even admitted in a blog post that social media can sometimes harm democracy.

Soros suggested that U.S. officials draw from their European counterparts, particularly Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, whom he described as the "nemesis" of U.S. tech monopolies. Vestager, a former Danish economy minister, and other European Union officials have recently advanced a host of enforcement actions against prominent U.S. tech companies.



[Google promises YouTube crackdown on terrorist propaganda, extremist videos](#)

[Google is promising to be more vigilant about preventing terrorist propaganda and other extremist videos from appearing on its YouTube site amid intensifying criticism about the internet's role in mass violence.](#)

European Union officials have sued Google over alleged antitrust violations tied to its search engine, its mobile operating system and its ad platform. In 2016, competition authorities ordered Apple to pay Ireland more than \$15 billion in uncollected taxes. Facebook has been penalized by several privacy watchdogs for breaking data protection rules.

Soros acknowledged that Europe's approach to antitrust law and regulation differs from that of the United States. But his criticism of Facebook and Google could empower Democrats who have already expressed skepticism toward Silicon Valley and the broader world of tech and telecommunications.

In October, for instance, congressional Democrats, with notable support from Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, introduced legislation to place greater disclosure requirements on web platforms that run political advertisements. The

lawmakers behind the bill say the rules would help prevent Russia and other foreign powers from exploiting social media and undermining U.S. elections. And last summer, the Democratic Party released a broad economic agenda, dubbed a "Better Deal," that included stricter enforcement of antitrust laws and a push against corporate monopolies.

While Soros is often criticized by conservative figures who oppose his political projects, his attack on the tech giants highlights a brewing convergence between leaders on the left and the right viewing Silicon Valley as a perverse influence on the country.

"It is only a matter of time before the global dominance of the U.S. IT monopolies is broken," Soros said. "Davos is a good place to announce that their days are numbered."

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*Story by Hamza Shaban.*