

## **21010 Facebook Libra is ‘most invasive and dangerous form of surveillance ever designed’, critics say**

June 2019 | adapted from *The Independent* website

Facebook’s plan to launch its own currency has once again raised significant privacy concerns, with some critics claiming it could be the most “invasive and dangerous” form of surveillance the technology giant has yet conceived.

The unveiling of the Libra cryptocurrency comes just over a year after the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which saw the private data of millions of Facebook users manipulated for the purpose of political profiling. Since then, the social network has been plagued by a series of privacy scandals that have continuously called into question the way Facebook handles its users’ data.

Libra is positioning itself as a new global currency that could take on mainstream currencies like the US dollar, as well as traditional financial institutions. But Facebook’s decision to branch out into this area could potentially open its users up to risks far beyond the privacy scandals of the past.

“If you’re concerned with Facebook knowing too much or having too much access to your private data, Libra will give Facebook even more direct access to your financial information,” said Phil Chen, a cryptocurrency expert who pioneered HTC’s first blockchain smartphone.

“It’s not just access to the information of your transactions, it’s direct access to your wealth and capital.”

Alongside Facebook are 27 other major companies involved in the Libra project. It spans financial firms like PayPal, Mastercard and Visa, to tech companies like Uber and Spotify.

Advocates say it will help the 1.7 billion people around the world who don’t have access to basic financial services, but for George McDonough, co-founder of blockchain investment firm KR1, the new currency is all about collecting more valuable information from people.

“This move into the murky world of cryptocurrency is about tapping new wells of data, the modern day oil,” he said.

Facebook did not immediately respond to a request for comment about how its users’ data will be collected and used, though the Libra Association claims it will be built on a “secure, scalable, and reliable blockchain”.

The handling of financial data will inevitably come with increased scrutiny, meaning Libra could force Facebook to tighten up its data security across all its apps and services.

At least this is the hope of Aurelie L’Hostis, a senior analyst at market research firm Forrester.

“We can expect regulators and governments to raise questions regarding Facebook’s financial data collection and management process, and whether that system meets all legal and regulatory requirements,” she said.

405 words