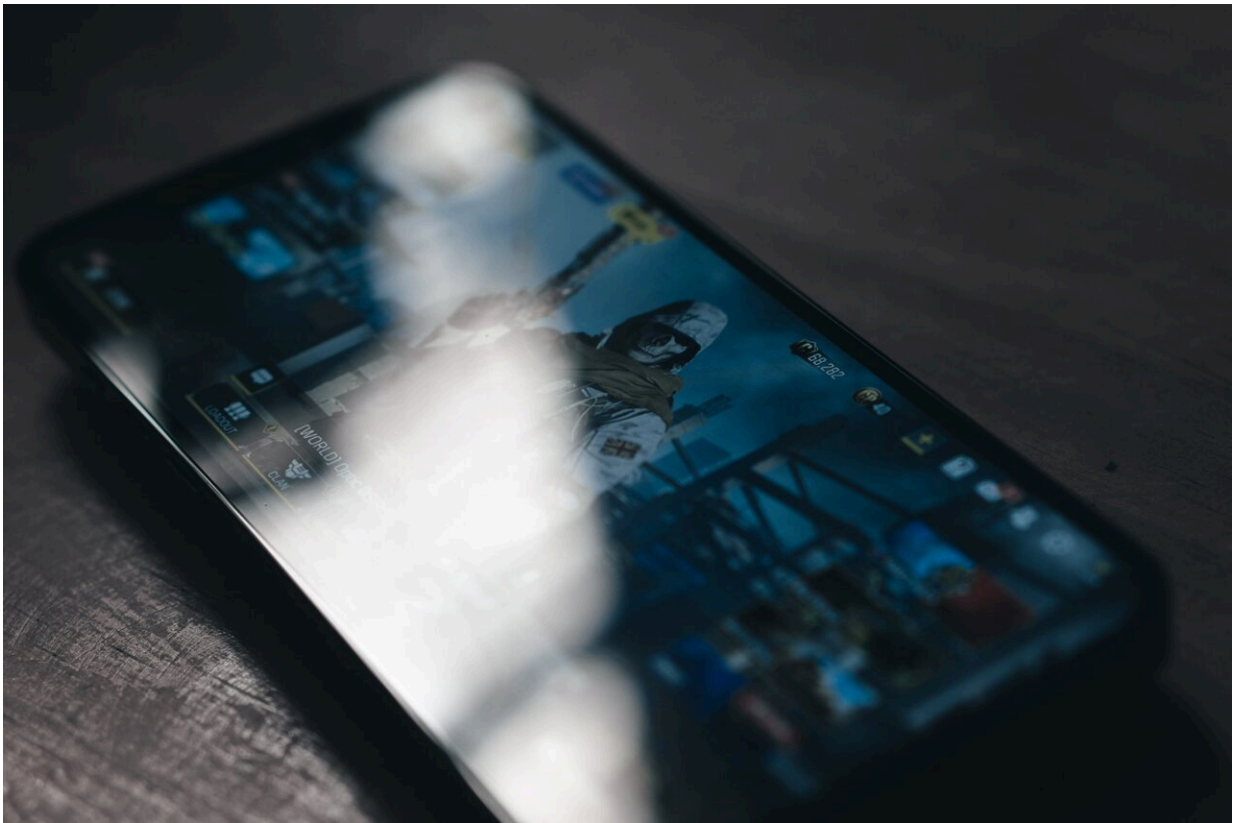


Microsoft says China approves its plan to buy video game-maker Activision Blizzard

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Microsoft said Friday that China has unconditionally approved its plan to buy video game company Activision Blizzard, even as the deal still faces antitrust opposition in the U.S. and United Kingdom.

China's approval is complicated by the fact that [Activision Blizzard stopped offering](#) many of its games in mainland China earlier this year because of a dispute with its local publishing partner.

China and the European Union are the two biggest economies to have approved Microsoft's planned \$69 billion takeover of the California game publisher behind popular titles such as World of Warcraft, Call of Duty and Candy Crush.

European regulators representing the 27-nation bloc [approved the deal Monday on condition](#) that Microsoft make some promises meant to boost competition in the emerging cloud-based gaming market.

China's State Administration for Market Regulation cleared it without conditions, according to Microsoft, though as of late Friday the agency's website didn't mention the decision.

Game sales in mainland China come with a requirement that game-makers work with a Chinese publisher to release titles in the country. And since earlier this year, popular Activision Blizzard franchises such as World of Warcraft, the StarCraft series, Overwatch and Diablo have been suspended because of a disagreement between Activision subsidiary Blizzard Entertainment and its Chinese partner, NetEase.

Blizzard had a longstanding partnership with NetEase dating to 2008, which helped the latter company grow to become China's second-largest games distributor after local rival Tencent.

But the U.S. company said late last year it would suspend most of its game services in China after current licensing agreements ended, leading to a public spat between the two companies.

Microsoft says its planned Activision acquisition—considered the

priciest tech deal in history—now has been cleared in 37 countries, which includes the 27 in the EU as well as 10 others such as China, Japan and Brazil. But the blockbuster deal is still in jeopardy because British regulators have rejected it and U.S. authorities are trying to thwart it.

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