

Illegal Online Gambling in Indonesia: Assessing State Securitization and Its Effectiveness

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Abstrak

Setelah pandemi COVID-19, Asia Tenggara sudah menjadi tempat yang sangat strategis bagi berkembangnya judi daring ilegal lintas batas. Judi daring ilegal telah menjadi ancaman yang merugikan kepentingan negara-negara Asia Tenggara. Di sisi lain, Indonesia adalah salah satu di antara negara-negara Asia Tenggara yang masih beribaku dengan permasalahan judi daring ilegal. Kerugian-kerugian tersebut tidak hanya melingkupi kerugian ekonomi nasional, tetapi juga kerugian secara sosial dan ekonomi bagi kesejahteraan warga negaranya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran negara dalam menghadapi isu judi daring ilegal tersebut terhadap operasi mereka yang bersifat lepas batas sebagai suatu pelaku lintas batas. Analisis itu akan dilakukan melalui kerangka Mazhab Kopenhagen, yaitu teori sekuritisasi. Melalui metode kualitatif dan tinjauan pustaka, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pemerintah Indonesia memang memainkan peran yang penting dalam melawan judi daring ilegal dengan upaya mensekuritisasinya sebagai ancaman yang nyata terhadap objek lindungannya. Kendati demikian, efektivitas dalam upaya itu cukup diragukan dalam runkup kendala yurisdiksi. Namun, solusi-solusi alternatif seperti penguatan kolaborasi dan komunikasi internasional masih harus terus ditegaskan.

Kata Kunci: judi daring ilegal, Asia Tenggara, Indonesia, sekuritisasi, kontrol negara

Abstract

After the COVID-19 pandemic, Southeast Asia has become a lucrative epicenter of illegal online gambling across borders. Illegal online gambling has emerged as a threat that harms the national interests of Southeast Asian nations. On the other hand, Indonesia is one of the Southeast Asian nations that has been struggling with the issue of illegal online gambling. Those harms encompass not only national economic loss, but also the socio-economic well-being of the citizens. This research analyzed the role of state actors in dealing with illegal online gambling compared to the offshore operations of illegal online gambling as transnational actors. The analysis of the securitization theory was taken under the framework of the Copenhagen School. Through the qualitative literature review method, this research discovered that the Indonesian government has played a pivotal role in combating illegal online gambling by securitizing it as an existential threat that harms its referent object. Hence, due to jurisdictional constraints, their effectiveness throughout their operation remained questionable. However, alternative solutions, such as strengthening international collaboration and communication, must always be assured.

Keywords: illegal online gambling, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, securitization, state control

INTRODUCTION

Since its growth in 2010 and the surge during the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Southeast Asia has been a profitable epicenter of cross-border illegal online gambling. Asia Pacific is the second-largest illegal online gambling market, with Southeast Asia being the second, compared to South Asia, East Asia, and Oceania (UNODC, 2024a;

Graphical Research, 2021). Some reasons for its development include (1) cross-border operations of online gambling, which render it immune to states' jurisdictional initiatives to restrain it (Fahrudin et al., 2021); (2) not only is it operated on a transnational (beyond jurisdiction) scale, but also online on the pervasive network of the internet, which makes it challenging to combat due to its leeway to keep

generating websites and the accessibility it can provide to its users (Hasibuan, 2023).

The revenue received by the online gambling or casinos industry in Southeast Asia has been growing consistently since 2018, more than three times (Statista Market Insights, 2024). In 2017, there were approximately 1.5 million Southeast Asian online gamblers, but this number escalated to 4.1 million in 2024 (Statista Market Insights, 2024). The proliferation of online gambling in Southeast Asia is driven by offshore operations by the Chinese, especially in Mekong, Thailand. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that there have been over 340 licensed and non-licensed casinos in the Mekong (UNODC, 2024a).

However, following COVID-19 restrictions, offshore operators shifted to online gambling with more convenience to the users. Online gambling has granted a new source of revenues, projected in 2023 to reach USD 438 million, a significant rise from USD 109.2 million before the pandemic (UNODC, 2024a). Similarly, operators in Cambodia experienced a significant revenue surge from online gambling, rising from 101 in 2021 to 174 online casinos in 2023 (UNODC, 2024a). It marks the alarming rise of online gambling in Southeast Asia.

In security studies in International Relations, online gambling can be categorized as a transnational crime (Tjandra, 2024). There have been cross-border operations in various locations (UNODC, 2024a). Most Southeast

Asian countries outlaw online gambling (Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2022). While countries such as Cambodia and the Philippines legally licensed online gambling in the 2010s, the attempt to nest all of the offshore operations began to rise (UNODC, 2024b). It was not until the ban on online gambling in Cambodia and the following measures by the Philippines in 2019 that operations in other parts of Southeast Asia were altered. Meanwhile, the proliferation of online gambling in Southeast Asia is perpetuated by China’s strict policy on gambling, which has pushed the operations to relocate to Southeast Asia (United States Institute of Peace, 2024). The report by the official police of the Republic of Indonesia suggested that the nationwide issue of online gambling is involved in transnational operations by mafia from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar (The Indonesian National Police Headquarters, 2024).

The urgency of online gambling cannot be separated from its harms. One of the most prominent harms of online gambling is economic deficits. Online gamblers often suffer from debts due to their repeated attempts to win. It links to its second harm: the addiction that pushes online gamblers to keep playing until they win. For all specific reasons, the addictive nature of online gambling costs the gamblers economic loss. Eventually, when they begin running out of money, they will feel depressed and desperately look for any means to compensate for all the debts, with criminals being no exception (Bakhtiar & Adilah, 2024).

Table 1. Aggregate Revenue Received by Online Casinos in Southeast Asia

Name	Aggregate Revenue (million EUR)
2017	135.8
2018	139.8
2019	167.7
2020	198.0
2021	237.5
2022	329.4
2023	382.1
2024	431.7

Source: Statista Market Insights (2024)

Indonesia has a significant number of online gamblers. Some sources stated that Indonesia holds the most online gamblers globally, with its users totaling 201.122, Cambodia as the second, and the Philippines as the third (Asyidiqi, 2024). According to the data by the Central Report of Monetary of Indonesia (PPATK), there has been a rise in the transactions for online gambling in Indonesia from 250.726 times in 2017, to 43.597.112 times in 2021, and 104.791.427 times in 2022 (Trisista, 2024). The same institution concluded the recent data, stating that on July 26, 2024, there were approximately 4 million online gamblers in Indonesia, and 40% were active workers aged 30–50. The fact that most Indonesian online gamblers are active workers is highly concerning due to the economic blow that might harm their working activities (Central Report of the Monetary Authority of Indonesia, 2024).

The prevalence of illegal online gambling and its harms trigger the state to take measures against it. Accordingly, this research assessed the effectiveness of the state's role in dealing with a transnational issue like online gambling. The significance lies in the rising network of cross-border actors who carry out actions that threaten states' territorial integrity. In this case, offshore operators of illegal online gambling in Southeast Asia possess the potential to threaten and question states' effectiveness in securing their people's well-being. Moreover, under the assumption of the state's ineffectiveness, this study also explored the possible contribution of the non-state actors. Therefore, to what extent can Indonesia's securitization overcome illegal online gambling as a transnational crime in Southeast Asia?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Copenhagen School is regarded as the challenger to traditional security studies. With its emphasis on a performative, reflective, and post-positivist approach to security, the central tenets of the Copenhagen School maintain that "security is constructed as a result of human and not state agency" (Filimon, 2016). Hence, the constructivist approach of the Copenhagen School plays a role in addressing "the performative power behind the contemporaneous security architecture and the security practices of threat construction" (Filimon, 2016). Diversification of actors would entail diversification of issues, which extend from military issues to cultural, societal, and environmental issues (Baysal, 2020).

The constructivist approach of the Copenhagen School necessitates individual agency in security. Humans are involved in security by acknowledging the performative aspect of security carried through securitization theory, which states that security is not separated from politicization. According to Emmers (2016), the securitization includes: (1) non-politicized issue where the state does not acknowledge the significance of the issue; (2) politicized issue where states acknowledge the issue into the standard policy and decision-making mechanism; (3) "securitized" where the securitizing actor would take extraordinary measures by identifying the existential threat to a specific referent object, through a speech act.

Table 2. Demographics of Online Gambling Players in Indonesia in 2024

Category	Percentage
Below 10 years of age	2.0%
10-20 years of age	10.9%
21-30 years of age	12.9%
30-50 years of age	40.7%
Above 50 years of age	33.5%

Source: Central Report of Monetary of Indonesia (2024)

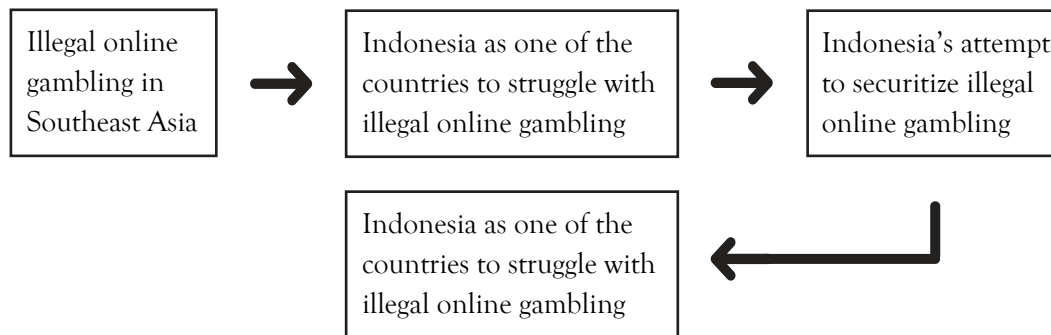


Figure 1. The Framework of Securitization (Processed by Authors, 2025)

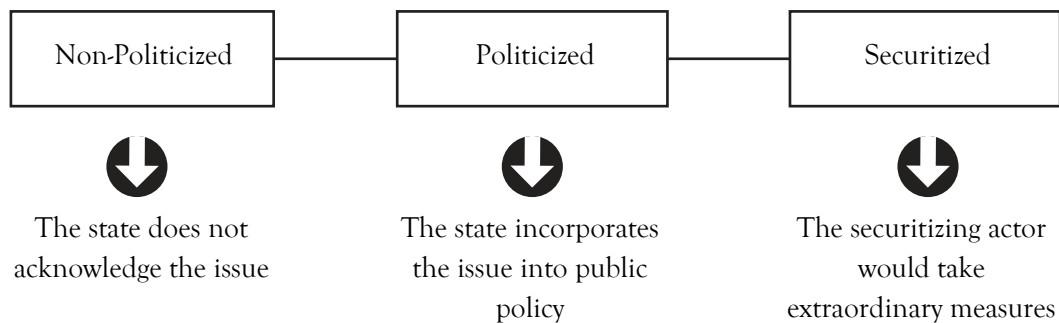


Figure 2. The Spectrum of Securitization (Emmers, 2016)

First, there is the securitizing actor. The securitizing actor contributes to delivering a message that a referent object is becoming significant. The securitizing is usually the government officials who hold the authority. Second, there is the speech act. A securitizing actor will perform and deliver the speech act to the relevant audience. Speech act refers to the performative message by the securitizing actor that will convince the relevant audience about the significance of the referent object (Pertiwi, 2021). Third, there is the referent object. The referent object is the issue the securitizing actor considers significant through the speech act. A referent object might not be a priority, but it will become one once the relevant audiences deliver and accept the speech act. Fourth is the relevant audience, which includes actors vulnerable to the referent object. According to Buzan, Weaver, & de Wilde (1998), securitization is successful if the relevant audiences accept the securitization. Fifth, there is an existential threat, tending to be outside normal politics. Thus, since “securitization is a form of radicalization and ‘extreme politicization’, marking a

moment when an issue breaks the barrier of normal politics” (Stepka, 2022), measures taken are extraordinary, as it is beyond normal politics.

Through the lens of the Copenhagen School, the concept is beneficial in explaining non-conventional security issues such as illegal online gambling, especially when its unconventional nature enables its crime beyond the jurisdictional territories, which eventually justifies its framing as a security issue. Due to its constructivist tendency, it also allows societal discourses to expand the security issues into the daily well-being of the Indonesian citizens, apparently harmed by the illegal online gambling.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative method. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), a qualitative method has several characteristics. First, qualitative researchers do not bring the research objects into their laboratories; they approach and explore everything about them. Hence, the qualitative approach emphasizes the

researcher's role as a key instrument throughout the research. Therefore, to generate a holistic account, a qualitative approach allows researchers to gather data inductively from various sources such as interviews, observations, documents, books, and others, by prioritizing the points of view of the research objects, instead of stepping in with their own. However, researchers are encouraged to reconsider how their personal views might affect the study. This study prioritized data collection based on research and legal institutions. Hence, sources were selected based on their methodological and official authority.

Furthermore, this research was carried out through a literature review. According to Snyder (Snyder, 2019), a literature review is a "... systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research" (Snyder, 2019). With all in mind, all the previous research and the official documents were compiled to produce the proper conclusion to the research.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Despite the harm it imposes upon Indonesian citizens and the official policy to securitize it, the issue of the state's expected effectiveness remains a concerning problem. The core issue lies in the unconventional nature of illegal online gambling, which enables it to work beyond the state's jurisdictional power. It raises the question: Should we rely upon states or non-state actors?

ILLEGAL ONLINE GAMBLING AS AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The offshore operations of illegal online gambling severely restrict state control due to the "jurisdictional ambiguities" that deprive them of enforcing laws (Egerer & Marionneau, 2024). Offshore operations make it difficult for the stakeholders to take adequate measures. States have been blocking websites suspected of illegal online gambling. Due to its transnational nature, which leads to jurisdictional constraints, circumvention attempts by users are still possible to counteract the state's policy (Egerer & Marionneau, 2024). It might include using a virtual private network (VPN). In addition, offshore operations are skilled at generating

false URLs and blocking implementation due to state deficiencies (Egerer & Marionneau, 2024).

Offshore operations rely upon a transnational network and cross-border transactions. It enables the low cost of committing crimes as its offshore characteristics conceal its *modus operandi* and resist the state's jurisdictional measures (Jia, Liang, Xiong, & Zhang, 2022). Apart from that, it also enables users to use it easily. The factors include game varieties, ease of making accounts, higher payouts, betting, promotional offers, various payment methods, and complaint process (Gainsbury, et. al., 2018).

SOCIOECONOMIC HARMS AND INDONESIA'S VULNERABILITY

The discussion over the existence of harms is highly significant. According to Zhong, Du, & Zhao (2024), while recreational gambling is accepted socially, illegal online gambling, due to its ease of use, is prone to making users addicted. It often manifests into "addicted gamblers often report feelings of shame and anxiety due to their inability to stop gambling despite the negative consequences" (Zhong, Du, & Zhao, 2024). The survey among 1,004 teenagers in Hong Kong has proven that online gamblers are susceptible to pathological gambling behaviors, more or less 1.5–3.2 times more likely (Zhong, Du, & Zhao, 2024).

Illegal online gambling also harms a state's economy. Those engaged in illegal online gambling boost the number of financial outflows, leading to domestic financial instability (Asyidiqi, 2024). It also extends into socioeconomic impacts. Due to the addiction, users keep gambling even though they have suffered from massive financial losses (Judjianto, Indarsih, Natsir, & Amin, 2024). It could worsen into social costs, manifested in the dismantling of social cohesion among members of society. Moreover, all the financial outflows have also been a waste for a state's economic growth since they could have been a fuel for economic growth only if they had been allocated to domestic activities (Judjianto, Indarsih, Natsir, & Amin, 2024).

In Southeast Asia, illegal online gambling is a concerning international issue, according to UNODC (2024a). China's ban on illegal online gambling has pushed the activity to relocate to Southeast Asia, especially in the Mekong region of Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia (Longdale, 2023). Other sources state that the Philippines and Cambodia "have achieved notoriety due to their reputations as gambling meccas for Chinese nationals" (ASEAN, 2024). On top of that, illegal online gambling in Southeast Asia carried out by China in Mekong has brought other transnational issues, such as money laundering from illegal drug trafficking through the transaction of illegal online gambling itself (Longdale, 2023). Figure 3 illustrates the spread of casinos in Mekong countries (UNODC, 2024a), indicating their prevalence in Southeast Asia. Based on the map, proximity plays a role in determining which location casinos hold dominance in. Since it takes in a form of spill-over from the Chinese ban, most casinos in Southeast Asia are centered in areas near China, such as the borders of northeastern Myanmar, northern Vietnam, northern Laos, and northwestern Thailand. According to UNODC reports, several criminal networks are linked to casinos, including cyber fraud

operations (UNODC, 2024a). It is reported in UNODC that not only "online casino compounds in Southeast Asia have diversified their business lines and are regularly discovered to include cyber fraud operations", but even licensed land-based casino operators in the region are also employed by illicit businesses to justify their stolen funds and to serve as the host of cyber fraud activities.

While casinos, as the industry of gambling, are prevalent across the region of Southeast Asia, their legality varies among countries. Table 3 (UNODC, 2024a) exhibits the legality of gambling in Southeast Asian countries. The majority of Southeast Asian countries have prohibited online gambling, despite the varied measures. The various legalities thus remain the central concern.

Southeast Asian nations have taken collective measures. Since transnational offshore operations of illegal online gambling in Southeast Asia come from China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), on October 10, 2024, under the chairmanship of the Lao PDR, has formalized a joint statement with China on combating telecommunication network fraud and online gambling. In the document, China and ASEAN collectively agreed that,

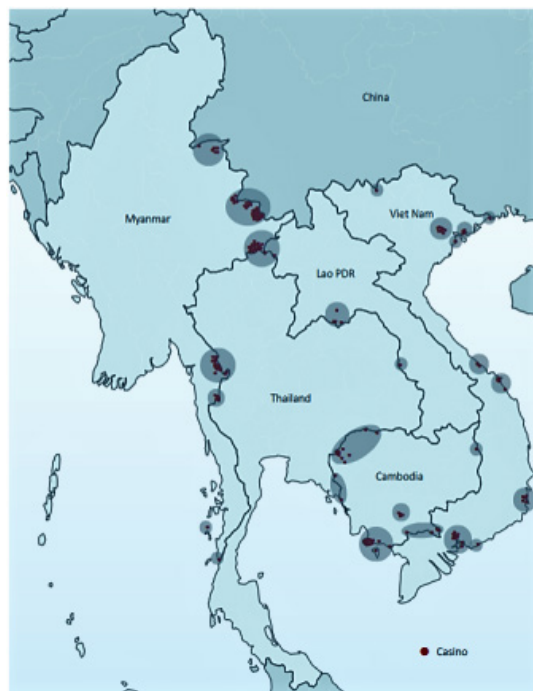


Figure 3. Location of Casinos in Lower Mekong Countries (UNODC, 2024a)

Table 3. Southeast Asian States' Policy toward Illegal Online Gambling

Country	Gambling legality	Online casinos
Cambodia	Illegal for locals	In 2019, all online casinos were closed due to pressure from the Chinese government.
Philippines	Legal	Natives can still operate online gambling as long as it is operated outside the Philippines.
Laos	Illegal for locals	Not legal, but still accessible
Vietnam	Threshold made for locals	It is not legal to own an online casino, but regional gambling sites are still accessible.
Thailand	Overall banned	Not legal, there are some cases of enforcement
Malaysia	Some kinds of gambling are legal; the illegal ones apply only to Muslim citizens under Sharia law.	No, but there is no precise legal mechanism regarding online gambling.
Singapore	Legal only within Singapore pools	Illegal except for exempt operators
Indonesia	Overall banned	Illegal with loopholes
Myanmar	Illegal for locals	Illegal, but there is no strong enough enforcement, so its existence is still pervasive.

Source: Global Initiatives against Transnational Organized Crime (2022)

“Telecommunication network fraud crimes and online gambling crimes have developed into a regional nuisance and have spawned upstream and downstream crimes, specifically money laundering, illicit drug trafficking, people smuggling, corruption, trafficking in persons (TIP), etc., which have ... seriously endangered the lives and properties of the

people in the region, social stability, and the international image of the region.” (ASEAN, 2024)

In the official document, China and ASEAN would deepen “law enforcement cooperation, making the fight against telecommunication network fraud and online gambling crimes a priority” (ASEAN, 2024). Therefore,

China and ASEAN have agreed to strengthen “cooperation and coordination among border management” (ASEAN, 2024).

INDONESIA’S SECURITIZATION TOWARD ILLEGAL ONLINE GAMBLING

Illegal online gambling is a significant issue in Indonesia. According to the data, Indonesia has lost financial revenues due to the capital flows from illegal online gambling, amounting to USD 56.36 billion. To put it on scale, Indonesia’s national revenue reached USD 261 billion in 2024 (Pratama, 2024). On the other hand, the addiction imposes burdens on the healthcare sector. A surge of 172 online gamblers were admitted into the hospitals for their addiction (ANTARA News, 2024). With all that harm, the Indonesian government has taken steps to securitize it.

Firstly, (1) the existential threat and (2) the referent object. Illegal online gambling has emerged as an issue threatening national security. It poses detrimental socioeconomic impacts to Indonesians, making it a concerning issue. Due to the severity of the issue, the Indonesian government has decided to securitize it for national security. Therefore, the referent object is the well-being of Indonesians, which is under threat from illegal online gambling and the economic growth of the country.

In light of the existential threat and the referent object, (3) the speech act and (4) the securitizing actor come into play. According to the official website of the Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia, President Joko Widodo mentioned, “Gambling stakes the future, both personal, family, and our children’s future. On the other hand, the government is seriously combating online gambling ...” (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2024a). The National Ministry of Communication and Information also asserted, “The government has announced its commitment to eradicating online gambling ...” (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2024b). Moreover, Indonesia has codified several laws to prohibit online gambling. Article 303 of the Indonesian Penal Code prohibits gambling activities, and the gamblers, according to this law, will be sentenced up to 10 years in prison or fined up to IDR 25 million. Law on Information and Electronic Transaction, in Article 27(2), prohibits anyone from distributing access to electronic information that contains gambling content. According to this law, the violators will be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison. Finally, Law No. 7 of 1974 about Gambling Control states that all forms of gambling are categorized as criminal offenses.

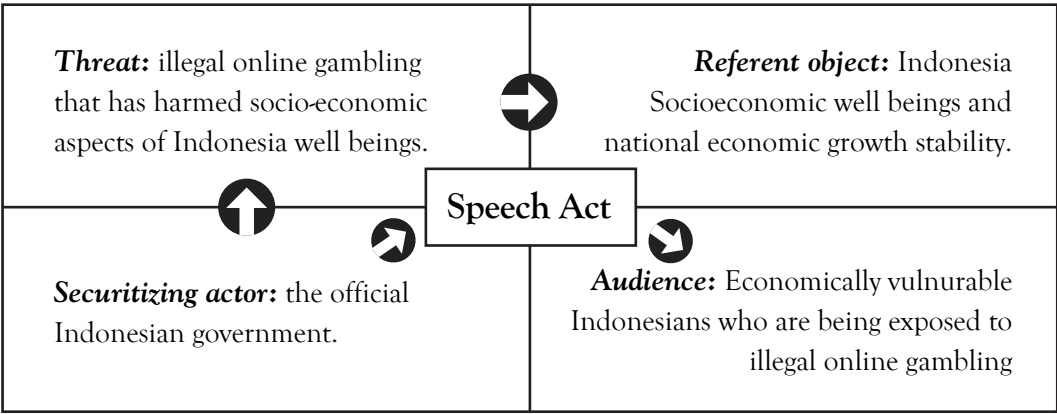


Figure 4. Five Fundamental Elements of Securitization of Indonesian Government’s Attempt to Securitization the Issue of Illegal Online Gambling (processed by Authors, 2025)

Third, (4) relevant audiences. Audiences encompass those vulnerable Indonesian citizens who are being exposed to illegal online gambling. Something unfortunate about those vulnerable Indonesians is the fact that they are economically struggling, but still suffer from addiction to illegal online gambling. There has been news: an Indonesian policewoman burnt her husband for his addiction to illegal online gambling, which led to the economic instability of the family; a certain military officer has committed suicide due to debts from illegal online gambling.

As a result, the government of the Republic of Indonesia has enacted measures. As of July 17, 2023, they have taken down 1,904,246 online gambling contents, and also blocked 5,364 accounts and 555 e-wallets affiliated with the activities of illegal online gambling (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2024b).

It is worth noting that despite the official measures, Indonesian citizens are still struggling with the threat of illegal online gambling. Although 74% of them favored the government's policies to counteract the operation of illegal online gambling (CNN Indonesia, 2024a), several analysts regret the ineffectiveness of the policy toward eradicating the crime (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2025).

THE OUTPUT TO BE EXPECTED FROM COMBATING ILLEGAL ONLINE GAMBLING

It should be clarified what criteria constitute the ideal output to be expected by state actors as the only legal authority when it comes to combating criminals, such as—in this case—illegal online gambling. It pertains to the rationales behind criminal punishment. According to UNODC, there are several underlying justifications concerning criminal punishment: (1) retribution, (2) incapacitation, (3) deterrence, (4) rehabilitation, and (5) reparation (UNODC, 2019). In this case, retribution, incapacitation, and deterrence are most relevant.

Retribution refers to the proportionality of punishing the wrongdoers. It was stipulated by Kurt Baier (1977 in UNODC, 2019) that premises of retribution include: (1) those convicted of crime deserve punishment; (2) only those convicted of a wrongdoing or crime deserve punishment; (3) the degree of punishment should not be

less; (4) nor greater than, the gravity of the crime.

Incapacitation is the idea that states have the principal and foundational obligation to protect the public from any criminal offences that would harm them. Incapacitation thus necessitates states' capability to prevent wrongdoings in the future. It includes states' capacity to "disable or restrict the offender's liberty, their movements or ability to commit a further wrong."

Deterrence draws on a principle which states that "the greatest utility lies in the greatest number". It has the same spirit as incapacitation, which is to minimize the possibility of criminal offences from happening again in the future. There are two dimensions: (1) individual deterrence, which refers to the punishment of an offender, which can deter them from repeating the same crime; (2) collective deterrence, which deters potential offenders who have the capacity to perform the same wrongdoing.

EFFECTIVENESS, STRUCTURAL LIMITS, AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATIONS

The official government of the Republic of Indonesia has publicly announced its declaration of war against illegal online gambling. According to Article 24, Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, judicial power is an independent power to administer justice to uphold law and justice. It suggests the Indonesian government enjoys executive power to enact laws through its national judicial power.

The official report of the national police of the Republic of Indonesia has stated that in 2023, there were hundreds of offenders reported each month. These included sectors such as private employees, while most comprised private employees. The case also extended into Surabaya and Bali. Indonesian official police have arrested the coordinator of illegal online gambling in both cities. As per the official report, these offenders were punished with a maximum imprisonment of 20 years (National Criminal Information Center of the Criminal Investigation Agency of the Indonesian National Police, 2023). Another similar report also suggests that the official police of the Republic of Indonesia have arrested 1,063 people, who were indicated to be the offenders.

Table 4. Cases of Illegal Online Gambling in Indonesia Reported Each Month

Month	Reported cases
January	352 cases
February	286 cases
March	1,063 cases
April	420 cases
May	248 cases
June	238 cases
July	275 cases
August	435 cases
September	457 cases

Source: National Criminal Information Center of the Criminal Investigation Agency of the Indonesian National Police (2023)

Through the National Ministry of Digital Communication, the Indonesian government reported that in 2023, it blocked over 805,923 instances of illegal online gambling content, and in 2024, 256,102 instances of illegal online gambling content. It included blocking websites, telecommunication companies, and IP addresses proven to assist the operation of illegal online gambling (Andriyanto, 2024). This number rose more in 2024. It was reported that in 2024, over 2.5 million gambling-related contents were blocked (Dobberstein, 2024). Regarding financial restrictions, the Financial Services Authority also reported blocking up to 5,000 bank accounts suspected of illegal online gambling. This measure refers to the states’ attempts to incapacitate the offenders of illegal online gambling in the hope that they would not operate again.

Even though the official Indonesian government has enacted several attempts of incapacitation through blocking numerous online platforms and deterrence through retribution against the offenders, the data unveiled a rise in the number of transactions of illegal online gambling in Indonesia of more than 200%. PPATK reported 117.59 million transactions, even in the first semester of 2024. It marks a spike since 2023, which only amounted to 168.35 million transactions (Dobberstein, 2024). It should be noted that this sharp

increase happened despite the massive arrest of illegal online gamblers in 2023.

The Indonesian government blocked 1,904,246 contents of illegal online gambling from July 17, 2023, until May 21, 2024. Additionally, 5.364 bank accounts affiliated with the activity of illegal online gambling were also blocked by OJK (Office of Assistant to Deputy Cabinet Secretary for State Documents & Translation, 2024b). Nevertheless, a sharp increase in illegal online gambling transactions occurred in 2024, reaching 237.48% in the first semester. It marks a drastic spike since 2023 (CNN Indonesia, 2024b). The data illustrate the comparison between the number of measures taken and the cases of illegal online gambling afterwards.

IF NOT STATES, ARE THERE OTHER ACTORS MORE CAPABLE? IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE?

States’ flaws in dealing with illegal online gambling were mainly analyzed through their nature. Jurisdictional limits constrain states. There have been numerous instances where the growing rate of illegal online gambling in New Jersey and the United States was pervasive that even its eradication was not deemed to be of high priority due to its offshore modus operandi, rendering it difficult for states to eradicate due to jurisdictional limits (Auriemma, 2002). A similar

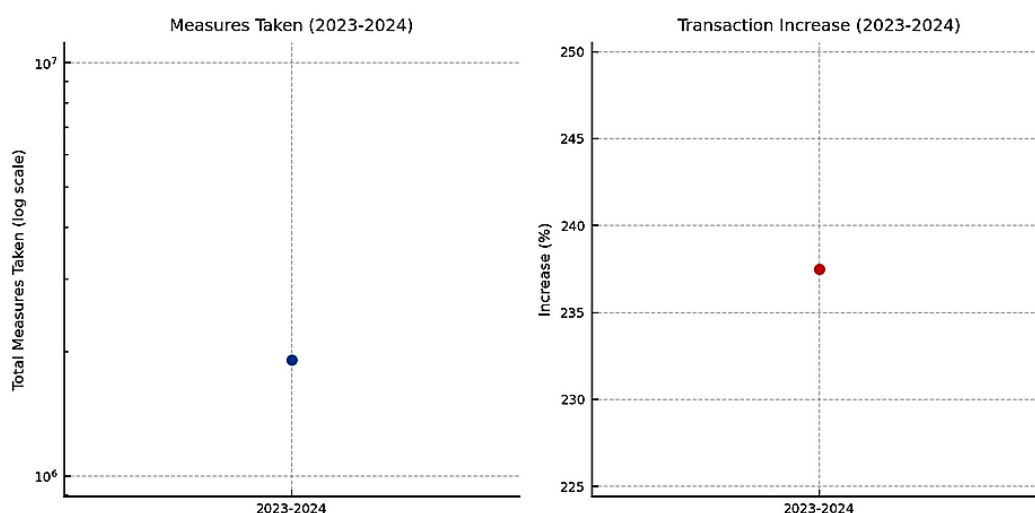


Figure 5. The Comparison Between the Measures Taken Versus the Transaction Increase From 2023-2024 (processed by Authors, 2025)

instance also took place in Kentucky; there was no personal jurisdiction over the domain name of the gambling website, thus, “states lacked the necessary authority to seize an Internet gambling website’s domain name from their respective domain name registrar” (Homeyer, 2011). The cases of gambling addiction in the United States have been rising despite “state efforts to control access to gaming through strict age or income restrictions” (Janower, 2006).

The state’s securitization is flawed because illegal online gambling operates outside its national jurisdiction to evade its laws (Egerer & Marionneau, 2023). When it is operated offshore, two challenges emerge: (1) states often find it difficult to eradicate illegal online gambling due to its pervasive location beyond the national radar—located offshore on the internet, causing the server to remain untouched, despite websites which have been blocked; (2) those offshore operators of illegal online gambling exploit the legal loophole: they would generate a server from a country that allows gambling to develop and make available websites for gambling on the internet worldwide; when the website comes within the territorial jurisdiction of the state who prohibits gambling, they cannot punish the offenders, although they might have inflicted harm upon their citizens within their territory (Jia, Liang, Xiong, Zhang, 2022).

Indeed, “the transnational nature of providing illegal online gambling services to customers across Asia demonstrates the limitations of national jurisdiction” (Ko, Seo, & Kwon, 2024). It is also argued that the emergence of transnational actors and issues could challenge “the traditional paradigms of power and democracy” and “thus necessitating a reexamination of their underlying principles” (Wirasenjaya & Santoso, 2024). Hence, does the incapability of states to eradicate illegal online gambling imply that non-state actors are more capable?

There are two possible answers. Regarding effectiveness, it remains to ask whether non-state actors are more reliable. It remains suspicious when their nature is immune to the state’s official measures. Due to the pervasiveness of the global internet, non-state actors might misuse it to cooperate with illicit activities, which national jurisdiction would find hard to apply.

Secondly, it is worth arguing that non-state actors tend to have fallen short not in effectiveness, but in their utilization. Several instances illustrate that non-state actors are underutilized. The first category refers to intergovernmental organizations such as the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Since January 2024, INTERPOL has gathered 110 member countries to enforce laws against

illegal online gambling through its global presence. Through Operation HAECHI, INTERPOL has specifically targeted any pervasive form of crime that enables illicit financial activities such as online gambling. In Southeast Asia alone, INTERPOL has discovered reports of scam call centers, primarily found in the Philippines, which are a highly lucrative platform for illegal online gambling (Infoplay, 2024). With its significant role in eradicating illegal online gambling, the Indonesian national police joined hands with Interpol in 2024. They stated that the exchange of communication between the government and the international police organization in eradicating illegal online gambling will be the main priority (Tempo, 2024). The second category considers the roles taken by civil societies as non-state actors. Those roles usually include public campaigns against illegal online gambling, contributing significantly to raising awareness among its citizens to prevent it (Igomu et al., 2024).

However, in light of the significance of non-state actors, does it imply their reliability? In this regard, non-state actors play two roles: (1) law enforcement by intergovernmental institutions and (2) public education. Concerning the former, any attempt, as long as it is built based on the instrumental logic of law enforcement, proves obsolete due to the unconventional nature of illegal online gambling, assuming that state actors are the most potent to play that role. Furthermore, public education by civil societies results in minimal to no significance in eradicating illegal online gambling.

Henceforth, there are two possible solutions: (1) due to its global pervasiveness, there should be international recognition of illegal online gambling and to make it a collective measure; (2) the issue of jurisdictional limits would be dealt with through a better way of communication and collaboration among states. If states cannot punish criminal offenders who operate across their jurisdictional boundaries, they can sign a legal agreement with the relevant state authorities to preserve justice against the offenders. Moreover, the absence of an international convention on illegal online gambling should be an issue of cooperation (Jia, Liang, Xiong, & Zhang, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Southeast Asia has been known as one of the worthwhile environments to host illegal online gambling offshore. Indonesia has been struggling with the domestic crisis of illegal online gambling, as it has become an existential threat to Indonesian socio-economic well-being and the national economic interests. The Indonesian government has contributed to securitizing illegal online gambling offshore by providing policies in line with its people.

Even with the emergence of cross-border international issues that are challenging for states to handle, states still play an essential role. However, as much as the Copenhagen Security framework illustrates the state's attempt through securitization, it does not highlight its effectiveness. In the case of Indonesia, the rate of illegal online websites and transactions keeps growing despite the measures taken. The primary reason against the ineffectiveness of state securitization in deterring illegal online gamblers entirely and effectively is jurisdictional issues. However, it does not indicate that non-state actors overtake the primacy of an actor in this particular issue. While states are flawed, non-state actors are not necessarily reliable due to their overreliance on legal instrumentality and soft campaign, which is hardly significant. States should consider several alternatives, such as strengthening international communication and collective measures by the international community. It is still far from happening, but it is not beyond the feasibility for state actors to act upon.

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