

Institutional risks of organised crime in the gambling business: Structure, mechanisms of influence, and threats to the national security of Ukraine in wartime context based on the analysis of case studies

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Abstract. Organised crime operating in the gambling business (both legal and illegal) started exploiting it to finance enemy activities in Ukraine during the war, as well as recruiting agents to commit crimes against state security, which necessitated the investigation of the key risks posed by such organised crime and formulation of proposals to reduce it. The purpose of this study was to identify institutional vulnerabilities related to the penetration of organised crime into the gambling business in Ukraine, analyse its structural features and mechanisms of operation, and assess the threats it poses to national security in the context of armed conflict. The study employed a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach using the perspectives of legal, sociological, and security sciences, using comparative legal analysis, historical-legal method, and legal modelling. Application of these methods helped to identify the social risks of the gambling business, particularly the spread of gambling addiction among vulnerable segments of the population, which, in conditions of stress and economic

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instability, contributes to the involvement of players in criminal activity. Normalisation of gambling, financial difficulties, and the lack of adequate state protection transform the player from a victim into a potential instrument of criminal influence on state security. The study identified key mechanisms of political, corrupt, economic, and security influence of criminal groups. Based on the findings obtained, concrete recommendations were made to minimise institutional risks: automation of processes in the gambling business, improved protection of players, expanded access for law enforcement agencies to information systems, and active use of digital technologies in financial investigations. The conclusions were aimed at improving the effectiveness of the fight against organised crime and strengthening Ukraine's national security in the wartime context

Keywords: crime structure; protection of players' rights; state security; crimes against the state; operational-search countermeasures; crime prevention; crime investigation

Introduction

For a long time, gambling in Ukraine was prohibited and recognised as a crime, which was usually organised on a professional basis by organised criminal groups and criminal organisations, which became their profession. But in 2020, after the permission of the gambling business in Ukraine with adoption Law of Ukraine No. 768-IX (2020), the structure of organised crime also transformed. Legalisation of gambling created opportunities for the development of the legal industry, but at the same time opened more channels for money laundering, financing illegal activities, and destabilising the internal security of the state. In the conditions of a full-scale war, since 2022, organised crime in Ukraine has been increasing its influence in strategically significant areas of the economy, in the gambling business. In 2025, the impact of organised crime on legal gambling markets is still understudied, especially in the context of threats to national security during war. Studying the structure of organised crime and the mechanism of its activity is necessary to develop effective countermeasures, and therefore there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the structure of criminal networks, the mechanisms of their activities, and the assessment of the institutional risks they pose to the state.

The issue of organised crime and its influence on various spheres of economic activity, on the gambling business, is studied in Ukrainian scientific literature by specialists from various fields of knowledge, including criminal law, criminal procedure, operational-detective activities, criminology, forensics, state security, etc. All these studies became the basis for the present scientific study. O.S. Dotsenko (2021) emphasised the cross-border nature of organised crime, noting that it poses a real threat to the state and society, which is manifested in intrusion into politics, economics, social, security, banking, financial and credit, law enforcement, privatisation, investment, natural resources, and other vital spheres of the state, creating shadow criminal schemes in them, establishing control over customs authorities, interfering in the development of market relations, and blocking effective reforming processes in the state.

After the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the enemy and the introduction of the legal regime of martial law, many Ukrainian scientists considered the issue of countering organised crime in wartime. T.V. Melnychuk (2023) analysed the level of organised crime in Ukraine under martial law in various markets. M.A. Dzhelilova (2023) identified additional criminogenic factors of organised crime under martial law: a series of legislative changes and the introduction of tax benefits in terms of customs clearance of a wide range of goods (consumer, excise, for military needs, etc.), the active import of thousands of tonnes of humanitarian aid into the territory of Ukraine; the inconsistency of

the legislators and the dispersion of state control in this area contributed to a significant intensification of the organised crime, involving public officers and officials in illegal activities, the establishment of entire schemes of work and communication, etc. A.V. Movchan and T.I. Sozansky (2023) considered the characteristics of modern organised crime, noting that its structure is characterised by a network environment, where relations between criminals are volatile, systemic, and profit-oriented, while crime itself poses a direct threat to the national security of Ukraine in conditions of military aggression, as it is exploited by the special services of foreign states, primarily the aggressor country, as a tool to destabilise the situation in Ukraine. According to I.G. Bogatyrev (2024), under the legal regime of martial law, the very criminological characteristics of organised crime change – its structure, dynamics, geography. Within its ranks are patriotic criminals pursuing self-serving interests, including recruitment of servicemen after our victory into the ranks of organised criminal groups; free access to illegal weapons; participation of former law enforcement officers and military personnel; illegal export of men trying to circumvent mobilisation, etc. In terms of the gambling business, in this case organised crime is usually built not on patriotism, but on supporting the enemy's policies and views.

However, in Ukraine there are currently no studies that would investigate the structure and functioning of organised crime in the gambling business and its use of the legal gambling business to commit crimes against the state. Based on the analysis of publications of Ukrainian researchers, organised crime in the gambling business is a complex phenomenon with a high level of adaptability to changes in socio-economic conditions, requiring an interdisciplinary approach for effective counteraction and making the study of this issue is extremely relevant. The purpose of this study was to identify institutional risks associated with the activities of organised crime in the gambling business of Ukraine, analyse its structural features, mechanisms of influence, and assess threats to national security in conditions of armed conflict. According to the set purpose, the following research tasks were defined:

- 1) to analyse the structure and methods of functioning of criminal groups in the gambling sector;
- 2) to investigate the social risks of the gambling business as a prerequisite for using players in criminal activities against the state;
- 3) to identify the principal mechanisms of the impact of organised crime on national security and assess the specifics of threats in the context of a full-scale war in Ukraine, and to formulate recommendations for minimising institutional risks and strengthening state security.

Materials and methods

Within the framework of this study, a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach was employed, based on a combination of methods of legal, sociological, and security sciences for a comprehensive analysis of the institutional risks of organised crime in the gambling business and their impact on the national security of Ukraine in wartime. The study was based on open data from the Unified Report on Criminal Offences for January-December and judicial reporting of the courts of first and appellate instance (Judicial Authority of Ukraine, 2022a; 2022b; 2024a; 2024b) for 2022-2024, which helped to assess the scale of crime in the field of illegal gambling and the effectiveness of criminal law measures to combat this crime. The study examined the materials of criminal proceedings available in the Unified Register of Court Decisions, which included rulings, resolutions, and sentences of courts for 2021-2025, relating to transnational organised crime in the field of gambling. The search for cases was carried out by the names of gambling organisers, the names of payment services and banks, which were subject to sanctions for ties with the aggressor state when receiving and transferring payments in the gambling business, as well as by the names of titles (Chairman and members) of the Commission for the Regulation of Gambling and Lotteries. The study examined a total of 6 court cases. Review of such court documents contributed to the study of the structure of organised crime in the gambling business during the war. Undeniably, some criminal proceedings may still be at the stage of pre-trial investigation and cannot be examined due to the secrecy of the investigation; upon their transfer to the trial stage, they may become promising objects of further scientific research.

The method of system analysis was employed to identify the interrelations between organised crime, economic stability, and the overall security situation of the state. This approach allowed viewing the gambling sector not in isolation, but within the broader socio-economic and criminological context, uncovering the mechanisms through which gambling may be exploited for money laundering and other illicit activities that threaten national security. The comparative legal method served as the basis for analysing the legislation of the European Union member states on gambling regulation and mechanisms for combating its criminalisation. This enabled the identification of both best practices and systemic weaknesses in foreign jurisdictions that can inform improvements in Ukraine's legal and institutional framework. The historical legal method was employed to trace the stages of development in Ukraine's legal regulation of the gambling business, considering legislative trends, socio-political changes, and governmental responses to the challenges of illegal gambling and its connection to organised crime. This method allowed for the recognition of the evolution and patterns of regulatory transformations. The modelling method was used to construct predictive scenarios concerning the potential influence of organised crime on national security under martial law. This involved simulating possible developments based on varying levels of regulatory oversight and identifying key vulnerabilities in the gambling sector. The inductive method was crucial in formulating the final conclusions and recommendations. By generalising the results of theoretical research, legal analysis, empirical data, and practical experience in combating organised crime, the study produced grounded scientific insights and

actionable proposals for enhancing Ukraine's national security mechanisms in wartime conditions.

Results

Structure and methods of functioning of criminal groups in the gambling sector. The gambling business, due to its specifics – high turnover of funds, partial latency of operations, complexity of control over financial flows – creates favourable conditions for criminal groups. Thus, the turnover of the legal gambling business market in Ukraine shows stable growth. The total turnover in this area in 2022 amounted to UAH 14 billion, in 2023 it increased to UAH 207 billion, in 2024 it slightly decreased to UAH 159.1 billion (almost USD 4 billion). At the same time, official tax revenues from the legal gambling market show constant growth, which makes the market attractive for investors. It is extremely difficult to estimate the turnover of the illegal gambling market. In 2024 alone, according to the Ministry of Digital Affairs of Ukraine, 118 mobile applications of illegal casinos were blocked: 92 in the AppStore and 26 in the Play Market. Furthermore, 4,460 online casino sites were removed by order of the State Special Communications Service of Ukraine (Press Office of the Ministry of Digital Transformation, 2025). However, it is exceedingly difficult to fight organised crime online because a new site appears in place of a closed one (Polinkova, 2025).

According to the General Prosecutor Office (2022), in 2022, only 174 criminal offences under Article 203-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) were recorded and only 7 persons were notified of suspicion. At the same time, only 4 cases were sent to court with an indictment. 68 proceedings were closed, and 168 decisions were not made. In 2022, there were 184 cases in court proceedings, 43 were received in the reporting period, 29 cases were considered, of which 14 resulted in a verdict (15 people were convicted), 1 was returned to the prosecutor, 7 were closed, and 155 cases remained unconsidered (Judicial Authority of Ukraine, 2022a). According to the Court of Appeal (Judicial Authority of Ukraine, 2022b), in 2022, the courts of appeal reviewed 4 cases under Article 203-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) and the court decisions were changed in all 4, 3 in connection with a significant violation of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine (2012).

In 2023, 164 criminal offences were recorded, 25 people were notified of suspicion (Fig. 1). At the same time, only 17 cases were transferred to the court with an indictment. In 83 cases, the proceedings were closed, and in 146 cases, a decision was not made. In 2023, 208 cases were filed with the courts, 52 were received in the reporting period, 31 cases were considered, 19 were sentenced (24 persons were convicted), 2 were returned to the prosecutor, 8 were closed, 177 cases were left unconsidered. In 2023, the courts of appeal reviewed 15 decisions of the courts of first instance, 10 were left unchanged (Pohoretskyi & Toporetska, 2024).

According to the Unified Report on Criminal Offences for January-December 2024 (2024), in 2024, only 175 criminal offences under Article 203-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) were recorded and 46 persons were notified of suspicion. At the same time, only 38 cases were sent to court with an indictment. 19 proceedings were closed, and 137 decisions were not made. In 2024, the courts had 243 cases filed (Fig. 2), 68 were received in the reporting period, 32 cases were considered, 23 were sentenced

(42 persons were convicted, including 13 persons in the organised group), 1 case was returned to the prosecutor, 6 were closed, 211 cases were left unconsidered (Judicial Au-

thority of Ukraine, 2024a). In 2024, the courts of appeal reviewed 10 decisions of the courts of first instance, 5 were left unchanged (Judicial Authority of Ukraine, 2024b).

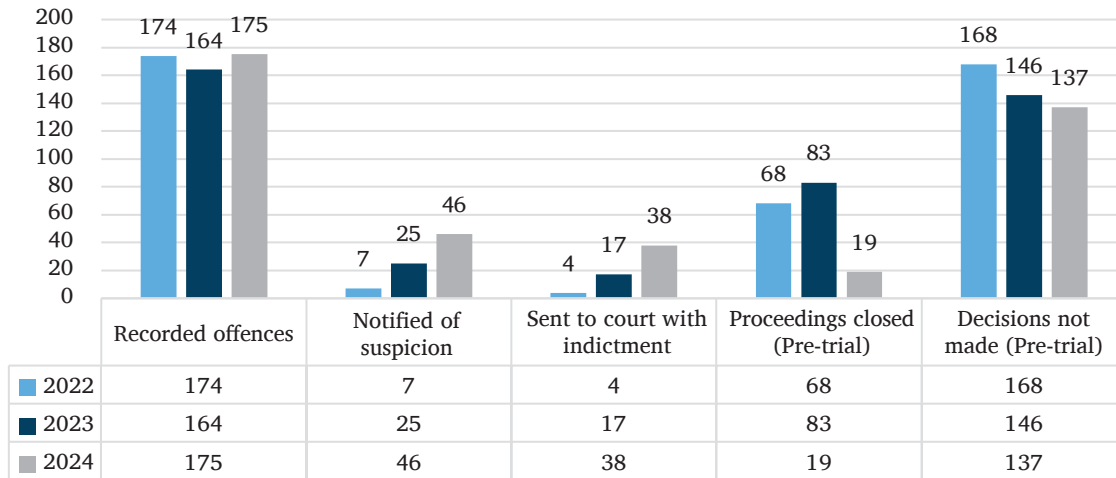


Figure 1. Criminal offences under Article 203-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (pre-trial)

Source: developed by the authors of this study based on data Judicial Authority of Ukraine (2022a; 2022b; 2024a; 2024b)

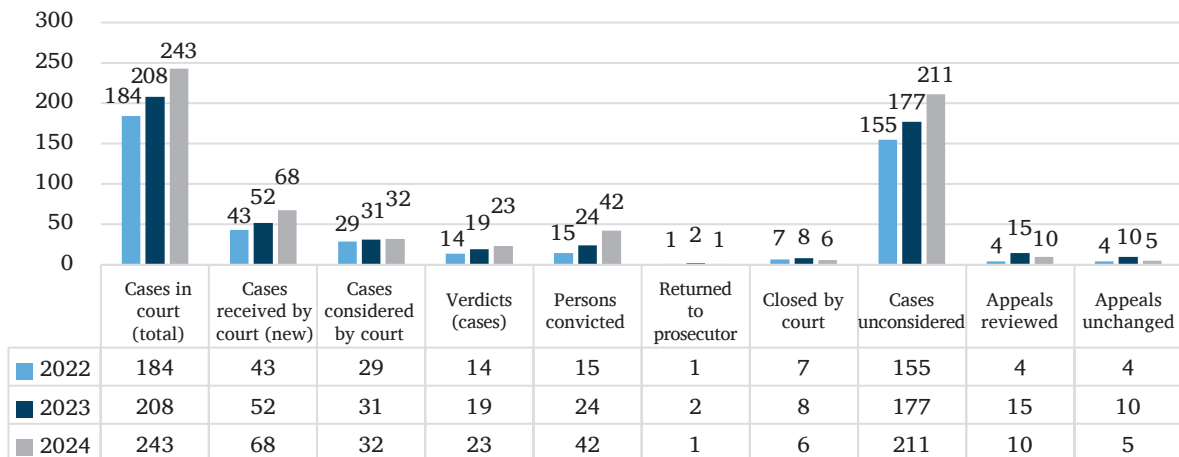


Figure 2. Criminal offences under Article 203-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (trial)

Source: developed by the authors of this study based on data Judicial Authority of Ukraine (2022a; 2022b; 2024a; 2024b)

At the same time, the volumes of the legal gambling market are much smaller. Thus, as of 2024, only 19 online casinos, 3 bookmakers, and 2 poker operators were legally operating in Ukraine. As for the land-based market, it was represented by 4 casino licences and 13 slot machine halls (Pohoretskyi *et al.*, 2024). Organised crime in this area manifests itself in several key forms: laundering of funds obtained through criminal means through legal gambling establishments; corrupt influence on state authorities and control bodies to avoid inspections and sanctions; creation of illegal gambling establishments, the activities of which are disguised as legal structures; financing criminal activities, including the provision of illegal armed groups (Shevchuk & Voluiko, 2025).

A feature of the functioning of organised crime in the field of gambling is the combination of legal and illegal elements. Criminal groups often own both legal licence establishments and shadow networks, which enables them to minimise the risks of detection and diversify sources of income as much

as possible. Furthermore, the gambling business is used to establish control over other sectors of the economy through investment, lending, and bribery of officials. In wartime, these processes become especially dangerous, since financial flows can be directed to support destructive forces working to undermine the statehood of Ukraine (Melnychuk, 2023).

With the beginning of the full-scale invasion of the enemy into the territory of Ukraine, organised criminal groups that worked in the gambling business continued to actively support the enemy, providing constant financing for the aggressor state, recruiting agents among gamblers who had financial problems due to excessive gambling or suffered from gambling addiction. The financial support of the enemy through the gambling business has become so large-scale that it has grown into the bribery of officials, the development of a complex criminal organisation that has penetrated the highest offices, the bribery and recruitment of new agents among top officials of Ukraine, the development of corruption, and the commission of crimes against the

foundations of the national security of Ukraine, which led to the highest reaction in the state, which was reflected in a series of decisions of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine on the application of special economic (restrictive) sanctions to many legal organisers of gambling in the form of cancellation of licences due to their ties with the aggressor country (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 145/2023, 2023). Most of the personal sanctions concern citizens of the Russian Federation who are associated with the gambling business. This list includes Ukrainian organisers, namely, Parimatch, Pokermatch.UA, Pointloto, Leo Financial Company, Your Betting Company. Additionally, this list also includes citizens of Cyprus, Armenia, Great Britain, Poland, Turkey, and the Netherlands. Among the legal entities are also Russian bookmaking companies, lottery organisers, racetracks, investment and entertainment companies: Sportbet, Betcity, Matchbet, Bookmaker's Office Pari, Marathon, BC Olimp.

Having analysed a series of materials, it can be said that the members of the criminal organisation included people who controlled state bodies and top officials, banks, payment systems, organisers of the gambling business, and therefore had full access to all information on the gambling market and could significantly influence decision-making in this area and massively withdraw funds to support the aggressor state. At the same time, the criminal organisation cooperated with other people who united in organised criminal groups. The criminal organisation had close ties with citizens of the aggressor state.

As for citizens of the aggressor state who created this criminal organisation, a special pre-trial investigation was initiated under Article 255 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) (creation, leadership of a criminal community or criminal organisation, as well as participation in it) (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Holosiivskiy District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 752/13094/22, 2023). The organisational structure and key roles of such an organisation were already established by law enforcement agencies. Specifically, this organisation included individuals who were responsible for searching for individuals to implement a criminal plan to commit particularly serious crimes in the field of gambling using web resources; monitoring the actions of other members of the criminal organisation; providing instructions to other members of the criminal organisation in order to ensure the conspiracy of the criminal organisation's activities; insuring (including financial) the activities of other members of the criminal organisation; carrying out marketing activities (purchase of advertising); ensuring technical maintenance of the web resource for the provision of gambling services; cashing in funds received from the activities of the web resource for the provision of gambling services from players; verifying web resource users; approving the withdrawal of funds; creating a legal entity to subsequently obtain a licence from the Commission for Regulation of Gambling and Lotteries (CGRL) for a web resource for the provision of gambling services; searching for a person to be appointed as the director of the specified legal entity and much more.

The created criminal organisation had the following characteristics: stability and cohesion of its composition; development and coordination of plans and methods of committing crimes related to conducting and providing access to gambling in an electronic (virtual) casino; the presence of

certain rules of conduct; agreement and readiness to commit crimes by all members of the criminal organisation at any time; "specialisation" of the criminal activity of the participants of the criminal organisation, which was expressed in the commission of intentional actions aimed at conducting and providing access to gambling in an electronic (virtual) casino; stability of the members of the criminal organisation, which was expressed in the duration of their actions during the period no later than August 2018 to October 2022 and detailed organisation of the functioning of the criminal organisation; distribution by the organisers of funds received from criminal activity among all its participants; the unification of criminal actions by a single plan with the distribution of functions of each of the participants of the criminal organisation, aimed at achieving a single criminal goal; a clear hierarchy consisting in the subordination of the participants of the organisation to specific individuals. Current activities were provided, and all instructions were given using the group in Telegram messenger. The criminal organisation had several areas of influence, which are discussed below. In 2025, the Chairman of the CGRL was served with a suspicion under Article 111-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) "Aiding an aggressor state" and a preventive measure of detention without the right to post bail was applied to him (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 757/1209/25-к, 2025). One of the members of the CGRL was also detained on suspicion of aiding an aggressor state for a long time and did not take measures to cancel the licence of the enterprise to carry out gambling activities on the Internet.

Furthermore, the materials of various criminal proceedings contain data on the involvement of the head and members of the CGRL in other crimes precisely as part of an organised criminal group, e.g., criminal proceedings No. 1-кк/761/30286/2024 established the facts of preparing an organised group consisting of officials of the central executive body to obtain illegal benefits. According to the arguments set out in the application and the testimonies provided, the Chairman and members of the Commission for the Regulation of Gambling and Lotteries (hereinafter referred to as the Commission for the Regulation of Gambling and Lotteries), together with the First Deputy Chairman of the Advisory and Expert Council of the Commission for the Regulation of Gambling and Lotteries, as well as the First Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Public Joint-Stock Company of the Joint-Stock Commercial Bank "Industrial-bank" and other persons, were preparing to receive an unlawful benefit in the form of money in a particularly large amount from licence applicants for making a decision on licensing of activities in the field of organising and conducting gambling and bookmaking. The investigating judge of the Supreme Court in another criminal case concerning employees of banks and payment systems issued a permit for conducting covert investigative actions in the form of surveillance of a person in public places or of persons with whom that person was in contact, using video recording, photography, special technical surveillance equipment; -audio, -video surveillance of a person (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Shevchenkivskiy District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 761/45836/24, 2024).

Another criminal proceeding established that the head and members of CGRL deliberately ignored the information of the SBU and issued and then delayed the issue of revoking

the licence of the organiser of gambling, which was controlled by the aggressor state, which enabled the organised criminal group to create a full-fledged criminal technology. Thus, in criminal proceedings No. 6202400000000286, in Case No. 1-кв-272/25 (2025), a criminal scheme in the field of gambling business was organised by three citizens of the Russian Federation through three citizens of Ukraine and was aimed at functioning both on the territory of Ukraine and on the territory of the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the organised system of gambling of the brand involved the use of financial instruments of the Russian Federation. The receipt of monetary remuneration on the territory of Ukraine provided for the further use of material resources in the economic sphere, namely, the profit of business entities of the Russian Federation and the payment of relevant taxes to the budget of the Russian Federation, which finances the aggressive war against the state of Ukraine. Furthermore, the mechanism of the Pin-Up web resource, developed by citizens of the Russian Federation and implemented with the assistance of the Chairman of the CRGL and a member of the CRGL by citizens of Ukraine, provided for the voluntary collection and use of information about servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations created following the requirements of the current legislation of Ukraine, law enforcement officers, and other military personnel, which during a full-scale war with the aggressor state had negative consequences for the combat capability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

A member of the CGRL was detained and a preventive measure in the form of detention was applied to him, as the investigation established that he controlled a separate payment system, using which he facilitated the withdrawal of funds from the gambling business in favour of representatives of the aggressor state through a series of fictitious transactions (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Shevchenkivskiy District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 761/45836/24, 2024).

A criminal mechanism operated on the territory of Ukraine, involving, among others, citizens of the Russian Federation and Ukraine, aimed at performing financial transactions both in the temporarily occupied territories and in the controlled territory of Ukraine, and, among other things, financially supported the illegal gambling business and the further legalisation (laundering) of funds received from the above-mentioned activities. Replenishment of gaming accounts on illegal websites was possible using virtual assets through transfers to electronic wallets, “p2p” transfers to electronic payment instruments issued by Ukrainian banks, as well as through electronic wallets of the Internet payment services “Settlepay”, “Binance Pay” (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Lychakivskiy District Court of Lviv in Case No. 463/36/24, 2024).

In 2023, Leo Financial Company LLC, a payment organisation within the international payment system LEO and co-owned by the former co-owner of Ibox Bank (which was liquidated by the National Bank on 7 March 2023 due to violations of financial monitoring when servicing companies in the sports poker and e-sports fields), was also sanctioned for its ties with the aggressor state (Pylypiv, 2023). However, the use of payment systems will cease because, on 3 January 2025, the President of Ukraine signed the Law of Ukraine No. 4116-IX “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine in Order to Combat Gambling Addiction (Gambling Disorder) and Improving the State Regulation of Activities

Regarding the Organisation and Conduct of Gambling and Lotteries” (2024). The said Law prohibits the use of any payment services and stipulates that all payments in the gambling business must be made through bank accounts or cash desks of land-based gambling establishments.

Back in 2023, several gambling organisers were sanctioned for ties with the aggressor state and their licences were revoked. These were LLC “Your Betting Company” (brand 1XBET); LLC “Pointloto” (brand Pointloto1); LLC “Play Fan Investment” (brand Fan Sport); LLC “Pokermatch.UA” (brand PokerMatch); LLC “Parimatch” (brand Parimatch) (Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 145/2023, 2023). Furthermore, there are illegal websites operating in Ukraine that are associated with previously sanctioned companies. They continue to financially support the aggressor state and collect data on Ukrainian players to recruit them to commit crimes against Ukraine, including high treason, terrorist acts, etc.

Thus, within the framework of the investigation of the activities of a commercial structure, the connections of one online casino with representatives of the Russian Federation and Russian capital, as well as with entities subject to sanctions in Ukraine, were confirmed. As a result of the illegal operation of this online casino on the territory of Ukraine, information about clients was collected. Thus, the aggressor state had at its disposal personal data and information about the location of clients, including servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 1-кв-272/25, 2025).

It was established that Ukrainian citizens, in collusion with Russian citizens, developed a criminal plan involving the creation of business entities in Ukraine to generate profit, some of which was then redistributed. As a result, funds were taken out of Ukraine and personal data about users of the specified business entities’ services was collected. This data subsequently fell into the possession of Russian citizens close to the top leadership of the aggressor state. The data of the State Financial Monitoring Service of Ukraine was of great importance for establishing these facts, particularly the summarised materials of State Financial Monitoring Service No. 0332/2024/DSK. According to these materials, PERSON_4 had the characteristics of a nominal manager and the financial transactions carried out with the participation of LLC “Ukr Game Technology” were aimed at legalising (laundering) proceeds from crime (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 1-кв-272/25, 2025). The procedural form of such documents was established through investigative action and a review of documents, for which a corresponding review protocol was drafted.

To establish the facts of the collection and transfer of personal data of players, a complex of forensic examinations was conducted. Following comprehensive technical and forensic examinations, it was established that the website operating in the territory of the Russian Federation was created using the same software as that used by LLC “UKR GAME TECHNOLOGY”. As a result of a comprehensive forensic examination of electronic communications and a computer-technical examination, a procedure for registering a user of the services of the pin-up.ua site was established, as well as information received and stored by the specified resource, including personal data and location. A military examination established that using the online casino “PIN-UP”

services on the website by Ukrainian Armed Forces servicemen, other military personnel formed pursuant to Ukrainian legislation, law enforcement officers, and other military personnel led to the deployment of Defence Forces structural units during the performance of assigned tasks under martial law in Ukraine (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 1-кк-272/25, 2025).

The above procedural actions helped to establish that during the registration and identification of players, a complex of personal data was collected. Specifically, a new user (client) was registered on the website using either a mobile phone number or an email address. The account was then activated (confirmed) via an SMS message and/or email. To register on the website and use its services, the following user data was required: mobile phone number; email address; surname, first name, and (if available) patronymic; date of birth; series (if available) and number of the identification document, date of issue and the authority that issued it; citizenship (for non-residents); place of residence or place of stay (for residents) / place of residence or place of temporary stay in Ukraine (for non-residents); individual taxpayer card registration number, or passport number of a Ukrainian citizen, if a note was made about the refusal to accept the registration number of the taxpayer card; unique record number in the Unified State Demographic Register (if available). In addition to the information provided by the user during registration, the website stored information about the computer configuration, including the properties and parameters of the software and network. This included the platform (desktop/browser version or mobile application based on iOS or Android OS); IP address used for login/access, which allowed the user's approximate location to be determined (city and country); access date and time in the dd.mm.yyyy format; online status. In terms of the military personnel who played gambling games on this website (Decision of the Investigating Judge of the Pecherskyi District Court of Kyiv in Case No. 1-кк-272/25, 2025), this allowed obtaining not only their personal data and location, but also the location and place of deployment of Armed Forces of Ukraine personnel, as well as those of other military formations formed pursuant to the requirements of Ukrainian legislation, law enforcement officers, and other military personnel.

Social risks of the gambling business as a prerequisite for players being involved in criminal activity. Gambling is not a classic type of economic activity, because, as D.O. Getmantsev (2008) fairly noted, it is built on human vices (persistent negative moral quality, spiritual defect). Improper organisation of the gambling market and insufficient tools for protecting society carry high social risks associated with gambling addiction. This is a mental illness consisting of a persistent, episodic or periodic loss of control over gambling behaviour. It results in a preoccupation with gambling over other areas of life and leads to significant distress or impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning (ICD-10..., 2010). The WHO indicates that certain groups are at an increased risk of developing a gambling addiction. People going through major life events such as separation, retirement, injury or bereavement may be at increased risk. Social stressors such as poverty, discrimination and other adverse conditions also increase the risk. Intense online and sports-related gambling advertising also poses the risk of

normalising gambling for children and young people (WHO. Gambling, 2024).

Society, with its values, usually shapes a player's gaming behaviour. The influence of people in a person's social network can normalise behaviour and, for those in high-risk networks, normalise the harm associated with gambling (Russell *et al.*, 2018). However, such measures are only effective for people living in normal environments, free from constant exposure to negative factors. The conditions of war, however, lead to constant stress and a desire to escape reality, which increases the risk of gaming addiction. As gaming addiction is a diagnosed and treatable mental illness, it cannot simply be fought. It is estimated that about 1.2% of the world's adult population suffers from gaming addiction. With an estimated global adult population of 65%, that equates to approximately 63.1 million people worldwide, surpassing the total population of Ukraine (Denysenko, 2024).

Since 2021, Ukraine has had a Register of persons with restricted access to gambling establishments and participation in gambling. Being entered into the Register means that a person will not be able to play online gambling games or enter a land-based gambling establishment. This is an effective way of preventing gambling addiction. Players can enter the Register either by submitting an application themselves or by a court decision based on an application submitted by their relatives. In 2024, over 9,000 players were entered into the register, and as of 1 January 2025, it contained information on 11,593 people. Of the entries in 2024, 9,250 were based on self-restriction applications (i.e., the player's own decision), while only 139 were based on applications from relatives (CGRL, 2025). This suggests that the number of players noticing problems with their gambling behaviour has increased sharply since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

Severe gaming addiction can have negative social consequences for those around the player, who may experience problems in family relationships, at work and with friends and colleagues due to debts and other health issues. As a result, gaming addiction can become a social problem. Gaming addiction is diagnosed when a person experiences a constant or episodic loss of control over the time spent playing or overspending on the game for more than 12 months. According to a 2023 survey of Ukrainian players, 94% of pathological players reported an inability to resist the desire to play, and 83% of this group had considered stealing money to continue playing. Among pathological players, 85.0% play to earn money. All of the pathological gamblers surveyed experienced continuous gambling for more than five hours. Most of them played almost every day (79.2%) and lost significant amounts in a day, including more than half of their monthly income (36.8%), 25-50% of their income (19.8%) and 10-25% of their income (20.8%). 95% of such gamblers noticed that they lost more money or spent more time than they had planned (Toporetska *et al.*, 2024a). This leads to an increase in family poverty because increased gambling expenses result in an inability to purchase basic goods and services, causing debt.

The negative consequences of gambling are widely acknowledged to extend far beyond individual financial loss. Problem gambling is often associated with the breakdown of interpersonal relationships, including family breakdown, and an increased incidence of domestic violence. It can lead to extensive financial distress and social stigmatisation and may even push individuals to commit property-related

crimes such as theft or fraud. Furthermore, problem gambling frequently results in the neglect of parental and family responsibilities, which adversely affects the welfare of children and the stability of household dynamics. Of particular concern is the intergenerational impact: children raised in households where one or both parents have a gambling problem are statistically more likely to gamble themselves and are at an increased risk of developing gambling-related issues or addiction later in life. These patterns highlight the broader societal implications of gambling harm and emphasise the urgent need for comprehensive preventive and regulatory measures.

Gambling can also increase the risk of mental health problems and suicide. For instance, a Swedish study estimated that individuals with a gambling disorder are 15 times more likely to die by suicide than those in the general population (Karlsson *et al.*, 2018). In the state of Victoria, Australia, at least 4.2% of suicides were related to gambling (Rintoul *et al.*, 2023). A study in Australia showed that gamblers who concealed their problem gambling were significantly more likely to commit suicide (Rintoul *et al.*, 2023). The harm caused by legacy gambling reduces over time, with the greatest reduction occurring in the early years. On average, the harm caused by legacy gambling diminishes within 4 years (Rockloff *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, a gambling addiction affects not only the gambler, but also their environment. Therefore, harm is caused to people who do not gamble. Studies show that one gambler is responsible for at least six non-gamblers (Goodwin *et al.*, 2017). New research by N.A. Dowling *et al.* (2025) showed that problem gambling harms an average of six other people, who suffer an average of seven types of harm. Many of these types of harm persist after the problem is resolved, resulting in a reduced quality of life. Studies have consistently identified harm in several areas, with emotional and relationship harm being the most prevalent, followed by financial and health-related harm.

At the same time, people with certain real-life problems suffer more, and so they seek justice through gambling, using it as a means of achieving the desired results that they believe they deserve but are unable or unwilling to achieve by conventional means (Callan *et al.*, 2008). For example, they do not want to work but want to earn money easily. The desire for easy money and the inability to control behaviour based on gambling leads to the recruitment of gamblers to commit crimes against the state. This is facilitated by the fact that the state neither protects players nor recognises those with gambling addiction as victims of criminal gambling activities. Consequently, players cannot file lawsuits in civil proceedings or be recognised as victims in criminal proceedings, nor can they demand compensation from organisers for health damage caused by gambling or financial losses resulting from excessive gambling participation (Nestor & Pohoretskyi, 2024). From the standpoint of Ukrainian legislation, a gambler is considered an offender, although a person with a gambling addiction should be protected by the state.

Exploiting gamblers to commit crimes against the state. Upon receiving sensitive information, gambling organisers cooperating with the aggressor state analyse data from gamblers' personal accounts. When they detect signs of problematic or pathological gambling, they recruit these players to commit crimes in Ukraine that destabilise the state. The key signs of gambling problems include a loss of

control over playing time and money spent on gambling. Having received such information, the gambling organiser understands that such a player can easily be recruited to commit crimes in exchange for a reward, which they can then spend on gambling. Thus, gambling addiction has long been recognised as a mental illness that leaves players extremely vulnerable to outside influences. In Ukraine, one man stole from 27 churches to fund his gambling habit. Another man fraudulently took possession of a military man's wife's money, assuring her that her husband was alive and promising to help free him from captivity. He committed this crime due to his addictions to drugs and online gambling (In Kryvyi Rih..., 2025). In Kyiv, a woman posing as a volunteer collected money supposedly for a medical battalion and spent it on gambling (Zholondievskaya, 2025).

In 2024, mass recruitment began to set fire to military vehicles. Most people were recruited by the Russians via Telegram groups, which Ukrainians used to look for ways to make money quickly. The recruits were mainly young people, as well as people with alcohol, gambling, or drug addictions (Myasishchev & Raievskiy, 2024). They were punished under Article 114-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) for obstructing the lawful activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations, while their addiction was not recognised as a mitigating circumstance. In 2025, the widespread explosion and arson of commercial and entertainment buildings is also being carried out by drug addicts and gamblers. These actions are classified differently: one is considered high treason and obstruction of the activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, while the other is considered a terrorist act. Thus, on 11 May 2024, information was entered into the Unified Register of Pre-Trial Investigations based on Part 1 of Article 258 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (2001) concerning the commission of a terrorist act by unknown individuals, namely setting fire to the Shevchenko Commercial and Entertainment Centre in Zaporizhzhia. In the Poltava region, a woman who played in an online casino in search of easy money was recruited by agents from the Russian Federation and given the task of planting explosives near an Armed Forces of Ukraine or police administrative building. She made an explosive device and disguised it as a kettle. According to the plan devised by her handlers, she was supposed to die alongside potential victims, but the SSU prevented this terrorist act (Mohylevets, 2025).

These examples demonstrate the systemic interdependence between gaming addiction and vulnerability to external influences, particularly criminal or subversive recruitment. As a psycho-emotional disorder, gambling addiction transforms a person into an object with reduced critical thinking skills, an increased propensity for risk-taking, and greater dependence on external stimuli. This makes them susceptible to being used as a tool for destructive activity. In this context, the gambling industry, particularly when associated with foreign influences, is not only an economic or moral threat, but also a conduit for latent hybrid aggression. Criminal acts committed by individuals with a gambling addiction can range from fraud to terrorism, indicating their widespread use in subversive activities. However, law enforcement does not currently recognise gambling addiction as a mitigating circumstance. This necessitates rethinking the limits of individual responsibility and how society is protected in the context of hybrid warfare.

Key mechanisms of the influence of organised crime on national security and the specifics of threats to national security in the context of a full-scale war in Ukraine. Based on the above, the following key mechanisms through which organised crime impacts Ukraine's national security were identified: political, corruption, economic, and security impacts. Firstly, organised crime managed to influence the adoption of certain political decisions that shaped state policy in various areas by having access to category A civil servants. Through bribery, blackmail, or violence, they tried to indirectly influence other top officials who made decisions in the state in various areas. Such activity creates additional internal conflicts during the war, thereby weakening the country's defence capability.

Bribery of category, a civil servants gave criminals access to state secrets or information with limited access, as well as influenced their decision-making within the implementation of state gambling policy. Gambling also facilitated the laundering of corrupt officials' funds. In the case of the CGRL, this related to the personal data of players on the Register of Persons Restricted from Access to Gambling Establishments and Participation in Gambling. The CGRL's decisions regarding the issuance of licences to companies with ties to the aggressor state, the delay in cancelling such licences, and the delay in submitting information on the application of personal restrictive economic measures (sanctions) for cooperation with the aggressor state were also influenced. At the same time, corrupt officials' cooperation with organised crime undermines citizens' trust in the authorities, thereby undermining the country's national security.

Even in peacetime, gambling was a highly risky activity in terms of the state's economic security, as it was always associated with tax evasion, the legalisation of ill-gotten gains, smuggling, and the shadow economy, all of which undermine the state's economic stability. The impact on payment services and banks, and their involvement in criminal schemes, meant that extensive funds could be turned over without paying taxes or being subject to financial monitoring. Access to banking secrecy and information about players' financial status makes them vulnerable, enabling organised crime to recruit those with financial problems to commit crimes against the state in exchange for a reward. In wartime, when Ukraine is in dire need of financial resources and is completely dependent on foreign aid, budget losses arising from organised crime further weaken the economy, affecting the ability to finance the Armed Forces of Ukraine, purchase weapons and necessary equipment, and meet other military needs.

Ultimately, the aim of organised crime's activities within the gambling business is to destabilise the situation within the country by recruiting gamblers to commit terrorist acts and treason, as well as inciting others to commit offences that encroach on public security, such as arson and sabotage. Gambling winnings are also used to finance espionage and subversive activities by agents of a foreign state. Furthermore, withdrawing funds abroad to finance the aggressor country not only weakens Ukraine's economy, but also strengthens the enemy because these funds are used to purchase weapons and military and intelligence equipment for the aggressor state. This strengthens the aggressor and therefore affects Ukraine's external security.

Recommendations for minimising institutional risks and strengthening state security. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 850-r (2022) approved the

Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Combating Organised Crime (hereinafter referred to as the Plan). The Plan's main tasks include forming an effective system of institutional support for fighting organised crime, including delimiting and specifying the powers of bodies that combat serious and/or organised crime to eliminate duplication of competence, and introducing mechanisms for coordinating and interacting with such bodies effectively. It also lists many other significant tasks that should generally improve international cooperation and coordination between law enforcement agencies within the country, as well as increasing the effectiveness of the fight against organised crime. However, considering the specifics of organised crime in the gambling industry and its threat to state security, the Plan proposes concrete institutional mechanisms to combat organised crime in this area and ensure national security.

1. Automation of risk assessment processes in the gambling industry. To minimise the influence of politics, corruption, and the economy, it is essential to automate as many risk assessment processes as possible, such as issuing and cancelling licences, exercising state control over gambling business organisers' activities, and monitoring the turnover of funds. The first step is to implement the State Online Monitoring System, which was scheduled for launch in Ukraine in 2022 but has yet to be developed and implemented. This system is essential for controlling financial transactions in the market and improving tax administration. Additionally, corruption ties between the government and organised crime were primarily established when resolving issues relating to the issuance or postponement of decisions to cancel licences. Therefore, it is crucial to implement automated processes for verifying applicants before granting licences, as well as periodic automated checks of organisers to ensure compliance with legal requirements and licence conditions.

2. Protection of gamblers. Under current Ukrainian legislation, gamblers involved in illegal gambling are considered offenders and are subject to administrative liability, which has an extremely negative impact on them. Therefore, this liability should be abolished (Nestor & Pohoretskyi, 2024). Accordingly, gamblers are not recognised as victims in criminal proceedings on illegal gambling, and the harm caused to them is not established. As gambling can lead to gambling addiction, which is a mental illness, it is necessary to improve criminal legislation to include the harm caused to players as a qualifying feature of this crime. Special legislation in the field of gambling also must be improved to implement effective mechanisms for protecting the rights of gamblers to play safely, rather than merely declarative ones. This would involve implementing not only the principles of responsible gambling, but also active programmes for tracking players' gaming behaviour to identify signs of problematic or pathological behaviour and prevent the development of gambling addiction' (Toporetska *et al.*, 2024).

3. Provision of law enforcement agencies with access to information from automated systems in the field of state regulation of the gambling industry. Currently, legislation states that only the tax service has access to the State Online Monitoring System (SOMS) for the purpose of controlling tax payments (Yevsieiev, 2023). In addition to SOMS, it is necessary to grant the Bureau of Economic Security of Ukraine, which has the authority to investigate economic crimes, and the Security Service of Ukraine, which conducts analytical activities and identifies risks of criminal offences against

the state, access to all registers (including documents that served as the basis for issuing and revoking licences).

4. Reform of pre-trial investigation of crimes in the gambling business: introduction of financial investigation tools and expansion of digital technologies in the investigation of crimes. Financial investigation tools enable the rapid analysis of financial information and the establishment of economic links between multiple entities in a chain. This allows the structure of organised crime to be identified and its financing channels to be blocked quickly (Vazhynskyi, 2024). Using artificial intelligence to search and analyse open information on a specific entity significantly expedites the analytical activities of operational units, enabling them to identify information that can be used to further investigate members of organised criminal groups and criminal organisations in the gambling business. It also helps to identify their connections with the aggressor state. Additionally, machine learning algorithms can analyse large amounts of information, identify patterns of criminal activity, predict investigative vectors, and even identify potential criminals. This substantially accelerates the investigative process and enables prompt procedural and tactical decisions to be made in the pre-trial investigation of crimes. The active implementation of automated monitoring systems for risky transactions and suspicious business structures increases the potential for stopping criminal activity through operational and investigative activities.

Discussion

The above analysis and recommendations complemented a series of earlier studies. Thus, O.S. Dotsenko (2021), even before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, made quite relevant conclusions on the danger of organised crime for all spheres of the state, including state security, but her study did not contain examples of organised crime using its capabilities in favour of the aggressor state, because at that time there were no such examples. T.V. Melnychuk (2023) analysed the level of organised crime in Ukraine under martial law in various illegal markets, focusing on smuggling under the guise of humanitarian aid, grain smuggling, illegal export of men of draft age abroad, etc., but left the legal gambling market out of her focus, as well as the work of organised crime for the enemy. M.A. Dzhelilova (2023) identified additional criminogenic factors of organised crime under martial law, which were considered when analysing the effects of organised crime in the gambling business on state security. A.V. Movchan and T.I. Sozansky (2023) made quite reasonable conclusions that organised crime in wartime poses a direct threat to state security precisely due to its exploitation by the aggressor state to destabilise the situation in Ukraine. This allowed the researchers to formulate their conclusions regarding the methods and possibilities of exploiting gamblers to assist the aggressor state and commit terrorist acts on the territory of Ukraine.

I.G. Bogatyrev's (2024) conclusions regarding the general forensic characteristics of organised crime in wartime are significant. However, the author's claim that participants in such groups are so-called patriotic criminals who commit crimes against the aggressor state on a patriotic basis seems debatable. The present study showed that organised crime mainly operates for economic reasons (the desire to enrich itself), rather than for ideological reasons such as patriotism. In fact, the opposite is true: organised crime often supports the political views of the enemy.

H.V. Shevchuk and O.M. Voluiko (2025) investigated the administrative approach to preventing organised crime, proposing several conclusions and practical recommendations regarding the need to develop a national strategy for administrative crime prevention, and the introduction of a unified system of preliminary control of business entities. The researchers' conclusions became valuable for the present study, which detailed ways to reduce the effects of organised crime on the gambling business and state security. Rather than using the criminal-legal mechanism to bring them to criminal responsibility, this study proposed using administrative legal methods and mechanisms to improve the work of state bodies and institutions. This will significantly complicate or even eliminate the gaps that currently enable organised crime to exploit legal and illegal gambling businesses to undermine state security.

A separate block should be allocated to studies relating to the harm caused by gambling to society and players. This is because an understanding of the vulnerability of gamblers enables organised crime to exploit them, which poses a threat to state security. A.M.T. Russell *et al.* (2018) concluded that a healthy social environment enables players to change their behaviour and make the game safer. However, such conclusions must be considered in a different light. After all, no society is completely healthy. Even if one manages to reduce their urge to play, this does not mean that they can immediately avoid any harm from gambling. Another study by M. Rockloff *et al.* (2022) showed that it takes an average of four years to reduce gambling-related harm by half, with different types of harm (economic, mental health, family relationships, friendships, academic performance, etc.) taking different periods of time. A scientific study conducted in Ukraine by Z.M. Toporetska *et al.* (2024) confirmed the diversity and depth of the negative consequences of gambling addiction for players, as well as the additional military risks (e.g., stress, insufficient sleep, fear, and a lack of stability and planning ability) that increase players' vulnerability to recruitment by a foreign state.

A series of studies by A. Karlsson *et al.* (2018), M. Rockloff *et al.* (2022), A. Rintoul *et al.* (2023) proved that pathological gamblers are more likely to commit suicide. This indicates serious mental health issues and suggests that organised crime exploits the vulnerability of gamblers by recruiting them to commit crimes against the state, often resulting in the perpetrator's elimination. Of particular interest are the studies by B.C. Goodwin *et al.* (2017) and N.A. Dowling *et al.* (2025), which demonstrated the social connections of gamblers and proved that gambling addiction spreads to six non-gambling individuals in their social circle. These findings are significant in showing the potential influence of organised crime through gamblers on other individuals and the potential for indirect recruitment through the gambling business.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on the conducted analysis. Criminal groups operating in the gambling business had a clear hierarchical structure, stable composition, well-thought-out conspiracy system, and specialised functions among participants. Their primary goal was to profit by organising illegal gambling and financing the aggressor state. Controlling state bodies, banking institutions, and payment services enabled criminals to manipulate

Ukraine's gambling market, evade oversight, and launder funds flowing to the enemy state. The activities of civil servants, particularly individual CGRL officials, contributed to the development of the criminal network through bribery, deliberately delaying licence cancellation procedures and aiding the aggressor. Financial institutions and payment services played a key role in schemes to mask payments and ensured the financial flows of criminal activity. Sanctions against several banks and payment companies were imposed in response to these offences. The organisers of gambling cooperated closely with citizens of the aggressor state, enabling them to finance the war and collect sensitive information about Ukrainian citizens, particularly military personnel. Collecting personal data through online casinos became an additional tool for undermining Ukraine's security, as well as for recruiting individuals with a gambling addiction to commit crimes against the state. Criminals exploited gambling addiction as a means of exerting influence over vulnerable groups in society, leading to the recruitment of individuals for sabotage and terrorist activities.

The social risks associated with gambling pose a significant threat to societal well-being, primarily due to the growing prevalence of gambling addiction, which is now widely recognised as a serious mental health condition. This condition can lead to the gradual degradation of an individual's personality, the erosion of family and social relationships, financial instability, and an increased probability of engaging in criminal and antisocial behaviour. Vulnerability is particularly acute among marginalised social or economic groups and is exacerbated during national crises such as armed conflict or economic collapse. In such contexts, individuals are more susceptible to manipulative advertising, social influence and unresolved psychological trauma, all of which increase the probability of developing pathological gambling behaviour. Furthermore, the systemic lack of legal recognition of problem gamblers as victims of addiction results in their exclusion from social protection mechanisms and psychological support systems. Without legal safeguards and targeted interventions, these individuals are vulnerable not only to further personal decline, but also to exploitation by unscrupulous individuals within the gambling industry. Some gambling organisers intentionally exploit the

psychological and financial vulnerability of addicted players, drawing them into illegal activities such as money laundering, fraud, and other forms of organised crime. The intersection of addiction, legal neglect, and criminal manipulation highlights the urgent need for comprehensive regulatory reform that prioritises public health, social justice, and human dignity.

Based on the analysis of the influence of organised crime on national security in conditions of full-scale war in Ukraine, the following conclusions can be drawn: the political, corrupt, economic, and security influences of organised crime significantly weaken the state's defence capabilities, destabilise the internal situation, and facilitate the implementation of the aggressor state's interests. Corruption within government agencies, coupled with undue influence over key decisions related to the gambling industry, has resulted in the leakage of sensitive information, the manipulation of licence issuance, and the laundering of criminal proceeds. Economic pressure in the form of illegal gambling schemes, tax evasion, and shadow financial flows undermines the stability of the state budget, reducing financial opportunities for the army and defence sector. Security threats manifest themselves through the exploitation of gambling addiction to recruit citizens to commit terrorist acts, sabotage, and espionage, as well as by financing the enemy's subversive activities.

Institutional reforms are necessary steps to minimise risks and strengthen state security. These reforms include automating processes in the gambling business, protecting the rights of players, expanding law enforcement access to data, and introducing financial and digital investigation tools. Therefore, combatting illegal gambling and strengthening control over financial flows are crucial tasks for safeguarding Ukraine's national security amid ongoing aggression.

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Інституційні ризики організованої злочинності в гральному бізнесі: структура, механізми впливу та загрози національній безпеці України в умовах війни на основі аналізу матеріалів практики

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Анотація. Організована злочинність, яка діє у сфері грального бізнесу (легального та нелегального), в умовах війни в Україні, почала за його допомогою фінансувати діяльність ворога, використовувати можливості грального бізнесу для вербування агентів для вчинення злочинів проти державної безпеки, що обумовило актуальність дослідження основних ризиків такої організованої злочинності та формулювання пропозицій по їх зниженню. Метою даного дослідження було виявлення інституційних вразливостей, пов'язаних із проникненням організованої злочинності у сферу грального бізнесу України, аналіз її структурних особливостей та механізмів функціонування, а також оцінка загроз, які вона становить для національної безпеки в умовах збройного конфлікту. У дослідженні застосовано комплексний міждисциплінарний підхід з використанням оптики правових, соціологічних та безпекових наук, з використанням порівняльно-правового аналізу, історико-правового методу та правового моделювання. Застосування методів дозволило окреслити соціальні ризики грального бізнесу, зокрема поширення ігрової залежності серед вразливих верств населення, що в умовах стресу та економічної нестабільності сприяє залученню гравців до злочинної діяльності. Нормалізація азартних ігор, фінансові труднощі та відсутність належного державного захисту перетворюють гравця з жертви на потенційний інструмент злочинного впливу на державну безпеку. Були встановлені основні механізми політичного, корупційного, економічного та безпекового впливу злочинних угруповань. На основі отриманих результатів були запропоновані конкретні рекомендації щодо мінімізації інституційних ризиків: автоматизація процесів в гральному бізнесі, поліпшення захисту гравців, розширення доступу правоохоронців до інформаційних систем та активне використання цифрових технологій у фінансових розслідуваннях. Отримані висновки спрямовані на підвищення ефективності боротьби з організованою злочинністю та зміцнення державної безпеки України в умовах війни

Ключові слова: структура злочинності; захист прав гравців; державна безпека; злочини проти держави; оперативно-розшукова протидія; попередження злочинів; розслідування злочинів