

***Putin Will be Taken Out Before Any War Crimes Trial—Russia Analyst
Isabel van Brugen - Newsweek***

Russian President Vladimir Putin could be "silenced" by his country's elite before he has the chance to face justice at the court in The Hague, a Russia analyst has suggested.



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends his New Year address to Russians in central Moscow on December 31, 2017. © ALEXEY NIKOLSKY/AFP/Getty Images

*Putin was made a global outlaw on March 17 when he was **accused by the International Criminal Court (ICC) of the illegal deportation of children** from Ukraine to Russia during his full-scale invasion of the neighboring country.*

The arrest warrant legally obliges the ICC's 123 member states to carry out the arrest warrants on both Putin and Russia's presidential commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova.

*All ICC states—including every member of the **European Union**, most African states, all Latin and South American states except Cuba and Nicaragua, and even Tajikistan—are legally required to arrest Putin if he ever steps foot on their territory, the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) has noted.*

However, there is a chance that the Russian leader might not even make it to The Hague.

Vlad Mykhnenko, an expert in the post-communist transformation of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union at the U.K.'s University of Oxford, told Newsweek that Putin could be silenced by the siloviki, an elite group of Russian businessmen and leaders.

"Given Putin's extensive connections across Europe and what he could potentially tell the judges about corruption and dodgy dealings between Moscow and major Western capitals, there will be a lot of incentive to silence him before The Hague," Mykhnenko said.

The ICC's arrest warrant has made the Russian leader "extremely vulnerable" at home, said Mykhnenko.

Moscow does not recognize the ICC's jurisdiction or extradite its nationals.

Mykhnenko noted, however, that Putin could be arrested and sent to court at The Hague should he be removed from power, or if Russia's elites set him up for an arrest to oust him from power.

If Putin does risk visiting ICC member states and "gets into trouble," that could be the result of the siloviki setting him up for an arrest "to get rid of him," or to re-establish Russia's relationship with the West, said Mykhnenko.

"A substitute could be easily conjured up, who could even promise 'to avenge' the loss of the dear leader, but just for a show," he said.

Mykhnenko said in the context that the Kremlin trying to sweep the ICC arrest warrant under the carpet of public opinion, he finds recent remarks by Russia's former President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) "rather extraordinary."

Medvedev, who serves as deputy chairman of Russia's security council and was also prime minister for eight years, has warned that any attempt to arrest Putin on the ICC's warrant would amount to a [declaration of war against Russia](#).

"He's jumped in to claim to be 'holier than the Pope', to be more Z warmonger than Putin himself, as if indicating—whatever happens to Putin—I could return to be number one, you can trust me, the ultra-patriot, I will show them.." said Mykhnenko.

"In the same meeting with the heads of the [Russian military-industrial complex](#), he also tried to bully them into working harder, 'produce 1,500 tanks this year or else,' by citing two of Stalin's World War II scary telegrams to various managing directors of tank and airplane factories, which threatened the 'lazy comrades' with death unless they'd fulfill the production quotas."

Mykhnenko added: "So, Medvedev continues in his so far fruitless attempts to woo the siloviki, to look and sound uber tough and uncompromising in the face of Russia's western enemies."

On Saturday, Vyacheslav Volodin, an ally of Putin's and Russia's parliament speaker, proposed banning the activities of the ICC.

"It is necessary to work out amendments to legislation prohibiting any activity of the ICC on the territory of our country," Volodin said in a post on his Telegram channel. Newsweek has contacted Russia's foreign ministry by email for comment.