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AN ATTEMPTED POGROM IN DAGESTAN...

The ongoing Israel-Hamas war has inflamed Muslim sentiments and precipitated protests in many parts of the world. Even so, the events of late October in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan were jarring. On October 29th, a mob stormed the airport in the regional capital of Makhachkala in an attempt to find and lynch Jews returning on a flight from Israel. Regional authorities were initially caught unawares but scrambled quickly to shuttle passengers to safety and arrested over 80 participants in the riot. (Reuters, November 3, 2023)

...REVIVES REGIONAL WORRIES

In the aftermath of the outrage, regional officials have closed ranks – and attempted to silence locals. According to *The Insider*, Dagestani authorities have said that the riots were "planned from the outside" and instructed residents of the republic, and especially the nearby city of Derbent, home to the vast majority of the region's current community of 2,000 Jews, not to discuss the outrages further. "[T]he official point of view of the authorities and community leadership [was that] there was no anti-Semitism in Derbent, and what happened at the airport is an isolated case," the opposition investigative outlet notes.

The October 29th incident, however, has wider ramifications given Dagestan's prominence in past incidents of anti-Jewish violence. The majority-Muslim republic was the site of pogroms during the 19th century, as well as at least once, in 1926, in the Soviet era (a second episode, in the 1960s, is said to have been narrowly avoided). This sordid history led to a dwindling of the local Jewish community in the post-Soviet period, with many emigrating to Israel. Now, the region's remaining Jews are increasingly worried. The local rabbi in Derbent, Ovadya Isakov, has said that he does not feel safe and that it may be necessary to evacuate local Jews from the region in the future. (*The Insider*, November 16, 2023)

A HELPING HAND FROM PYONGYANG

Against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing military campaign against Ukraine, strategic ties between the Kremlin and the dictatorship of North Korea's Kim Jong Un are deepening appreciably. "Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine commenced in February 2022, Moscow's partnership with North Korea has deepened and gained strategic depth," writes Samuel Ramani of Britain's Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) for *38North*. "This transformation can be explained by North Korea's solidarity with Russia, ultranationalist support for closer bilateral relations, and Moscow's sharply anti-Western Indo-Pacific strategy." These factors, Ramani details, have transformed Pyongyang into a major stakeholder in Russia's war effort. On November 1st, he notes, South Korea's National Intelligence Service disclosed that the DPRK "had supplied over 1 million artillery shells to Russia."

This partnership, moreover, is poised to grow more robust still. "As tensions between the US and China persist, Russia sees its partnership with North Korea as a useful counterweight to US influence," Ramani argues. Specifically, "[a]s it prepares for a multi-year war in Ukraine, Russia sees North Korea as a long-term supplier of munitions." (*38North.org*, November 17, 2023)

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE KERCH BRIDGE

Since the start of the Ukraine war nearly two years ago, the Kerch bridge – which connects the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula to the Russian mainland – has become a high-profile target for Ukrainian forces seeking to dislodge Moscow's grip on the unilaterally annexed territory. The repeated targeting of the Kerch bridge, in turn, has become a serious logistical problem for the Kremlin because it represents a critical resupply route for Russian troops operating on Ukrainian soil. Now, Russian officials are seeking to create an alternative, and more secure, passage for their troops and materiel. Russian and Chinese business executives have reportedly met quietly to discuss an underwater tunnel connecting Russia to Crimea as an alternative – and more secure – logistics route. (*Washington Post*, November 24, 2023)