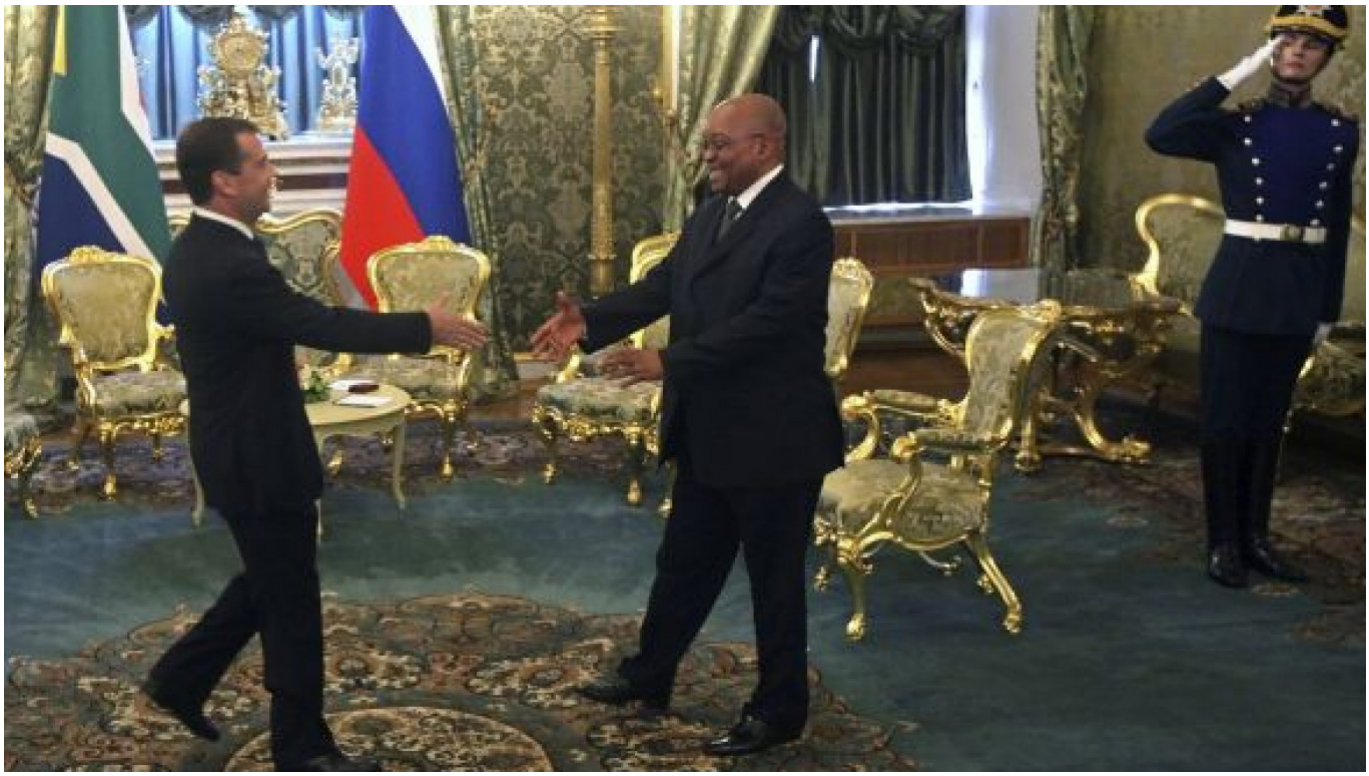
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Medvedev, Zuma Oversee Dealmaking

By Maria Antonova

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President Dmitry Medvedev welcoming South African leader Jacob Zuma in the Kremlin ahead of talks Thursday. **Maxim Shipenkov**

President Dmitry Medvedev met with his South African counterpart, Jacob Zuma, on Thursday in Moscow, where the two oversaw deals in the metals and nuclear industries.

Under the deal, Russian state uranium trader Tenex will sell enriched uranium to Eskom Holdings for use at South Africa's Koeberg nuclear station, which accounts for 5 percent of South Africa's energy needs.

The contract is an extension of one reached 15 years ago that is about to expire. Under the new contract, deliveries will begin in 2011 and last until 2017 to 2018. Russia hopes eventually to control 45 percent of the low-enriched uranium market in South Africa, Rosatom head Sergei Kiriyenko told reporters.

Additionally, Norilsk Nickel signed a memorandum with the South African government to create a joint mining venture in South Africa.

"We will be engaged in the exploration and production of minerals in the framework of this venture with the South African government," Norilsk Nickel head Vladimir Strzhalkovsky said, Interfax reported.

The metals giant is already involved in a joint venture with African Rainbow Minerals, which mines for nickel, zinc, cobalt, chromium and platinum.

On the governmental level, the two countries agreed to cooperate on space issues and may jointly launch satellites using Russian equipment, Federal Space Agency head Anatoly Perminov said, adding that Russia would also build a space data collection center in South Africa.

Among other deals reached in the course of the visit were agreements to cooperate on agricultural trade issues and visa-free diplomatic visits.

Medvedev and Zuma, who led a delegation of 11 ministers and about 100 businessmen in his first visit to Russia since taking office in May, also discussed South Africa's potential participation in the BRIC bloc.

Brazil, Russia, India and China, which have been grouped together as "BRICs" because of their fast-growing economies and regional influence, formalized the grouping when they started holding official summits last year.

"South Africa's participation in discussing various issues in the BRIC format would be very productive" since South Africa is also an emerging economy, Medvedev said, according to the transcript of the conference posted on the Kremlin's web site.

"Our countries share the commitment to a more fair distribution of power and influence on the global economic scene," Zuma said, adding that Russia and South Africa were "natural partners."

Russia has always been "sympathetic to the struggle of African countries for independence" and is "open to developing relations of a new kind," Medvedev said.

Zuma offered Medvedev his condolences for the Russians who have perished in the wildfires that are currently devouring the central part of the country. He also invited Medvedev to visit South Africa in 2012, the year of Russia's presidential elections.

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