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Algeria officially abandons its ambitions to join the BRICS group due to disagreement over political principles and membership criteria. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune (2019-present) on 6 October calls for the fast-tracking of three key mining projects aimed at diversifying Algeria's economy beyond energy exports. Top energy officials from Algeria and Niger met on 29 September to revive plans to complete the construction of the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline (TSGP). Algeria reimposes visa requirements on Moroccan nationals entering the country.

Algeria ends bid to join BRICS but stays in group's development bank...

Local media reported on 28 September that Algeria has officially abandoned its ambitions to join the **BRICS** group due to disagreement over political principles and membership criteria.¹ The BRICS group of developing countries was founded in 2009 by **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**.² BRICS accounts for 25% of global GDP and is home to 40% of the world's population. The bloc is often viewed as a rival to the **G7** and other **Western**-led blocs, as well as an ideological and economic counterweight to the **United States (US)** and its allies.³

Algeria's decision to end its BRICS membership ambitions reportedly came after recent speculation that BRICS members had approached the country about its potential membership, to which authorities responded by saying that "*Algeria has definitively turned the page even if it is a member of the BRICS bank*".⁴ Officials noted that Algeria's reasons for abandoning its BRICS membership ambitions are "*simple and logical*" and stem from its exclusion from the BRICS August 2023 summit in **Johannesburg (South Africa)** when six new members - **Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Argentina** - were admitted.⁵ Algerian officials criticised BRICS for not providing clear reasoning for their exclusion, noting that it was based on "*absurd selection logic*" and a failure to adopt a more inclusive approach.⁶ In a stinging rebuke, authorities said that Algeria's exclusion stems less from economic reasons than from political manoeuvring:

*"This incoherence will no doubt eventually reveal the limits of a bloc that claims to be reshaping the world economic order but is, in reality, itself a prisoner of its own calculations."*⁷

Officials added that Algeria, with its financial stability, strategic energy reserves and bold internal reform, should have "*naturally*" been included among the new members.⁸ Notably, Algeria's membership to the **BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)** was approved on 31 August, making it the institution's ninth member (*see ARC Briefing Algeria Sep 2024*). The foreign ministry said on 1 September that membership in the NDB reflects the country's stable macroeconomic indicators and resilience, strengthened by multi-sectoral reforms and its recent classification as an upper-middle-

¹ El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024; Middle East Monitor, 2 Oct 2024

² Reuters, 31 Aug 2024; Energy Capital Power, 4 Sep 2024

³ Morocco World News, 1 Aug 2022

⁴ Middle East Monitor, 2 Oct 2024; El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024;

⁵ Middle East Monitor, 2 Oct 2024; El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024;

⁶ El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024; Arab Weekly, 1 Oct 2024

⁷ El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024; Arab Weekly, 1 Oct 2024

⁸ El Moudjahid, 28 Sep 2024; Arab Weekly, 1 Oct 2024

income emerging economy.⁹ Joining the NBD also provides Algeria with an alternative institution to access resources for sustainable development projects.

Algeria's admission into the NBD lays the groundwork for its long-term goal of joining BRICS. However, Algeria's rejection of potential BRICS admission and its stinging rebuke of the group was unexpected, particularly given its close relations with China and Russia, as well as South Africa's finance minister **Enoch Godongwana's** admission on 26 August that Algeria would likely be among the next batch of countries to join BRICS (see *ARC Briefing Algeria Sep 2023*).

It is unclear how China and Russia will react to Algeria's decision, and it is also doubtful whether Algeria will reject membership if BRICS countries make a credible offer. A potential hint at this was authorities' emphasis that Algeria will continue defending its interests alongside BRICS allies in global forums such as the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, the **Group of 77** and the **Non-Aligned Movement**.¹⁰

Tebboune pushes for fast-tracking of strategic mining projects...

During a cabinet meeting on 6 October, President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** (2019-present) called for the fast-tracking of three key mining projects aimed at diversifying Algeria's economy beyond energy exports.¹¹ These include the completion of the **Gara Djebilet** iron ore mine (**Tindouf Province**), the phosphate mine in **Bilad El Hadba** (**Tébessa Province**) and the zinc and lead mine in **Valley Amizour** (**Béjaïa Province**).¹²

The Gara Djebilet iron ore mine commenced operations in mid-2022 with an initial production target of two to three million tonnes annually and is expected to produce 40-50 million tonnes annually by 2026.¹³ The mine has an estimated 3.5 billion tonnes of iron ore reserves, ranking it among the largest deposits internationally.¹⁴

The phosphate mine in Bilad El Hadba is projected to produce more than six million tonnes of phosphate per year.¹⁵ A railway project currently under construction will connect the mine to the country's mining network, allowing for the transportation of over 10 million tonnes of phosphate yearly, generating \$2 billion in annual revenues and creating 14,000 jobs.¹⁶

The zinc and lead mine in Valley Amizour, which was launched in November 2023, is projected to produce 170,000 tonnes of zinc concentrate per year.¹⁷ With an estimated 34 million tonnes of reserves, the mine spans 23.4 hectares and is expected to generate \$215m in revenues while creating almost 5,000 direct and indirect jobs.

If successful, these projects will help Algeria meet its long-term objective of diversifying exports beyond oil and gas, creating more jobs, boost the country's ability to both earn foreign exchange and exchange supply for domestic and international usage.

Algeria and Niger officials in talks to revive Saharan gas pipeline...

Energy and mines minister **Mohamed Arkab** met with **Niger's** newly appointed petroleum minister **Sahabi Oumarou** on 29 September to revive plans to complete the construction of a \$13 billion 4000km **Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline (TSGP)** that would transport gas from **Nigeria** to the **Mediterranean**.¹⁸ In addition to the two ministers, the meeting was attended by the top executives

⁹ Energy Capital Power, 4 Sep 2024; China Global South Project, 1 Sep 2024

¹⁰ Middle East Monitor, 2 Oct 2024; Arab Weekly, 1 Oct 2024

¹¹ Algeria Press Service, 6 Oct 2024

¹² Algeria Press Service, 6 Oct 2024

¹³ Zawya, 9 Oct 2024

¹⁴ Zawya, 9 Oct 2024

¹⁵ Zawya, 9 Oct 2024

¹⁶ Zawya, 9 Oct 2024

¹⁷ Zawya, 9 Oct 2024

¹⁸ Upstream, 30 Sep 2024; Pump-Africa, 4 Oct 2024

from state-owned energy companies **Sonatrach** and **Sonelgaz**, as well as from Niger's **Société Nigérienne des Produits Pétroliers (SONIDEP)**.¹⁹

Algeria's energy ministry called the discussions an opportunity to discuss the progress of the project, schedule future meetings to study various aspects of the TSGP and review how decisions have been implemented by Algeria, Niger and Nigeria.²⁰ Oumarou emphasised the significance of the TSGP and said that it will benefit all countries involved.²¹ He also noted that Niger will hold a meeting "*in the coming weeks*" with the petroleum ministers of the three countries. The TSGP has been proposed for the last 20 years and while sections of it already exist in Algeria and Nigeria, an agreement has never been reached to construct the critical link through Niger.²² However, there seems to be momentum towards bringing the Sonatrach TSGP towards completion.

While Algeria will boost its revenue generation if the TSGP is realised, Nigeria will benefit the most from energy exports, given that the project is one of three export pipelines in which it is invested. Nigeria and **Morocco** are also working on the \$25 billion **Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP)**, which has been in the works since 2016. Gas from the pipeline will supply 13 **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** countries involved in the project and benefit over 400 million people living in **West Africa** while improving energy infrastructure in the region.²³

Notably, several Moroccan publications have speculated that Algeria's decision to revive the TSGP is directly linked to its rivalry with Morocco.²⁴ While it is just speculation, it could indicate how geopolitical competition between the two countries often spills over into strategic infrastructure projects, with each country seeking to strengthen its regional influence and economic leverage.

Algeria reimposes visa requirements on Moroccan nationals...

State news agency **Algeria Press Service (APS)** announced on 26 September that the government had decided to reimpose visa requirements on Moroccan nationals entering the country.²⁵ The two countries lifted visa entry requirements approximately 20 years ago. Authorities have accused Morocco of abusing visa-free entries to perform criminal activities that threaten Algeria's stability and national security.²⁶ A statement from the foreign ministry, published in APS, accused Moroccans of having:

"Large scale networks of organised crime and drug and human trafficking as well as illegal immigration and acts of espionage".²⁷

The ministry also accused Morocco of sending "*Zionist*" spies holding Moroccan passports to Algerian territory.²⁸ Tebboune on 5 October defended the decision, saying it was driven by "*political and security considerations*", particularly concerning Moroccan-**Israeli** relations:

"There is a collaboration, not just a simple one... between the Zionist entity and Morocco... We have suspicions about certain individuals (Israelis) entering Algeria with Moroccan passports."²⁹

While both Tebboune and the foreign ministry did not provide any evidence to support the allegations, this latest retaliatory measure is most likely linked to Morocco's stance on **Western Sahara** and the normalisation of relations with Israel, which Algeria does not recognise.³⁰ A dispute over the status of the Western Sahara has been at the heart of deteriorating relations between the two

¹⁹ Pump-Africa, 4 Oct 2024; Upstream, 30 Sep 2024

²⁰ Upstream, 30 Sep 2024

²¹ Upstream, 30 Sep 2024

²² Upstream, 30 Sep 2024

²³ MAP News, 30 Aug 2024

²⁴ Africa Report, 4 Oct 2024

²⁵ Algeria Press Service, 26 Sep 2024

²⁶ Algeria Press Service, 26 Sep 2024

²⁷ Algeria Press Service, 26 Sep 2024

²⁸ Middle East Monitor, 26 Sep 2024

²⁹ Morocco World News, 6 Oct 2024

³⁰ Morocco World News, 6 Oct 2024

countries, culminating in Algeria cutting diplomatic ties with Morocco in 2021, accusing its neighbour of “hostile acts”.³¹

Morocco considers the Western Saharan territory, which borders Morocco, Algeria and **Mauritania**, as its own. However, the Algeria-backed **Polisario Front** movement has continuously demanded a sovereign state.³² The **United Nations (UN)** considers Western Sahara a ‘non-self-governing territory’ but Morocco actually controls 80% of it.³³ After **Spain** ended its colonial rule over Western Sahara in 1976, Morocco and Mauritania partitioned the territory between themselves. In August 1979, under pressure from the Polisario Front guerrillas, Mauritania withdrew all claims of its portion of the Western Sahara. Morocco then moved to occupy the territory and has since asserted administrative control over the whole Western Sahara.³⁴ This resulted in the outbreak of war between Morocco and the Polisario Front. Sporadic clashes claimed approximately 9,000 lives over 16 years. The UN brokered a ceasefire in 1991 but a planned referendum on independence was never held and the final status of the territory remained unresolved.³⁵

A three-decade cease-fire collapsed in late 2020 and shortly afterwards, the **United States (US)** under then-president **Donald Trump** (2017-2021) became the first country to back Morocco’s claim in a deal that also saw Morocco agree to normalise relations with Israel. Relations between Algeria and Morocco intensified after the decision by the US and continues to worsen.

Planner

Dec 2024 **Vienna (Austria) Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries+ (OPEC+)** meeting;

Chronology

9 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) Reuters**. Algeria has reportedly excluded **French** companies from a wheat import tender and required that tendering firms not offer French-origin wheat as diplomatic tensions between the two countries remain tense;

7 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) North Africa Post**. Southern Algeria and northern **Nigeria** continue to struggle to contain cholera and diphtheria outbreaks amid floods and insecurity;

7 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) Middle East Monitor Post**. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** says that the Moroccan people are a “brotherly nation” and that talk that they are being expelled from Algeria is “nonsense”;

7 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) Aawsat**. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** says that Algeria intends to buy shares in the **BRICS New Development Bank (NDB)** for \$1.5 billion;

6 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) Jeune Afrique**. President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** dismisses any notion that he will visit **France** as tense relations between the two countries continue;

2 Oct 2024 **Algiers (Algeria) Asharq Al Awsat**. Army chief of staff Lieutenant General **Said Chanegriha** makes an official visit to **Italy** to strengthen cooperation in the fields of counterterrorism, illegal migration and border security;

29 Sep 2024 **New York (United States) APA News**. Addressing the 79th session of the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**, **Malian** state minister and government spokesperson, Colonel **Abdoulaye Maïga**, denounces Algerian interference in Malian affairs;

³¹ Reuters, 26 Sep 2024

³² Reuters, 18 Mar 2022

³³ Africa News, 27 Sep 2023

³⁴ Xinhua, 30 Oct 2023

³⁵ Al Jazeera, 11 Dec 2020

27 Sep 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Reuters*. Health ministry says that cases of malaria and diphtheria had been registered in the country's south and all the reported cases are among expatriates who entered illegally from neighbouring countries;

26 Sep 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. National defence ministry announces the appointment of Brigadier General **Rochdi Fethi Moussaoui** as the director general of documentation and external security;

20 Sep 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Bloomberg*. State-owned energy producer **Sonatrach** says it wants to sign contracts with major energy companies within the next few months to develop new fields and export more of the fuel to **Europe**;

19 Sep 2024 **Algiers (Algeria)** *Middle East Monitor*. Prime minister **Nadir Larbaoui** tenders his resignation from cabinet, but President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** postpones his response;

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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