

ISSUES

- The president, who was elected in December 2019 and is backed by the Army, lacks credibility but is moving ahead with constitutional changes and plans to hold a referendum on a new constitution before the end of the year.
- The huge, peaceful demonstrations that rocked this country of 42 million last year have subsided with the pandemic and in the face of government arrest of activists and journalists, holding dozens without trial.
- Extremists operate in neighboring Mali, Niger, Libya, and Tunisia, and the Algerian government is getting involved in international efforts to solve the Libyan war.
- Bilateral relations with the U.S. have improved in the past decade, spearheaded by strong cooperation on counter-terrorism.

US INTERESTS

- Making sure that domestic political instability does not stir up violence and extremist recruitment.
- Continued cooperation with the Algerian government on regional counter-terrorism, especially in Libya and Mali.
- Algeria is a major trading partner for the U.S. in the Middle East and North Africa region and U.S. firms should have fair access to its markets.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stand back several steps on the domestic political unrest. The government is prickly about external pressure and we should not prescribe a detailed plan to resolve the impasse.
- Instead, broadly back an Algerian approach that wins wide public support.
- Without preaching, support the protesters' rights to freedom of speech, association, and peaceful assembly, as enumerated in the UN Covenant on Political Rights.
- Maintain discrete counter-terrorism cooperation with Algerian intelligence and the military. Behind closed doors with these Algerian security contacts we should counsel restraint and dialogue with the protesters.



- Boost working-level bilateral talks on regional security. As the new president settles into office, Algeria will play a more active regional diplomatic role.
- Expand our low-cost bilateral cooperation in rule of law and education reform to boost longer-term Algerian economic prospects, thus undermining extremist recruitment.