

# Eyeing Raqqa

## A Tale of Four Tribes

by [Andrew J. Tabler \(/experts/andrew-j-tabler\)](#)

Mar 21, 2017

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Andrew J. Tabler \(/experts/andrew-j-tabler\)](#)

Andrew J. Tabler is the Martin J. Gross Senior Fellow in the Linda and Tony Rubin Program on Arab Politics at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Syria and U.S. policy in the Levant.



### In-Depth Reports

For the past three years, the Islamic State has held Raqqa, the capital of its self-proclaimed caliphate. But lately, both the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-based Syrian Democratic Forces and the Turkish-backed Euphrates Shield forces have stated their intention to take Raqqa, raising complex questions about future governance in eastern Syria. Whatever the outcome, Arab tribes in the area will be central not only to defeating IS but to ensuring that the group does not return.

This new Policy Note, published anonymously for security reasons and edited by Andrew Tabler, is based on interviews with members of the four most prominent Raqqa tribes: al-Bayatrah, al-Ajeel, al-Breij, and al-Na'im. Along with detailed profiles of the tribes and their alliances, the paper discusses the related prospects for cooperation with U.S.-backed forces and notes potentially explosive issues, including Arab-Kurdish tensions and increasing concern over the involvement of Iran-sponsored Shiite militias. Only al-Bayatrah, based downtown, harbors no support for either IS or the Assad regime, offering a glimpse of challenges to come.

## THE AUTHOR

**A** [Andrew J. Tabler \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/tabler-andrew-j\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/tabler-andrew-j) is the Martin J. Gross Fellow at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on Syria and U.S. policy in the Levant. During fourteen years' residency in the Middle East, he was cofounder and editor-in-chief of *Syria Today*, the country's first private-sector English-language magazine. He has also served as a consultant on U.S.-Syria relations for the International Crisis Group and as a fellow at the Institute of Current World Affairs. ❖

## RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Ongoing Debates over Water and Electricity Privatization in Morocco

May 1, 2024

◆  
Soufiane Elgoumri

(/policy-analysis/ongoing-debates-over-water-and-electricity-privatization-morocco)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

Why Israel Should Declare a Unilateral Cease-Fire in Gaza

May 1, 2024

◆  
Dennis Ross,  
David Makovsky

(/policy-analysis/why-israel-should-declare-unilateral-cease-fire-gaza)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Understanding the IRGC's Past, Present, and Future Use of Syrian Tribal Militias

Apr 30, 2024

◆  
Abdullah Hayek

(/policy-analysis/understanding-irgcs-past-present-and-future-use-syrian-tribal-militias)

TOPICS

Arab & Islamic Politics (/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

Democracy & Reform (/policy-analysis/democracy-reform)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Syria (/policy-analysis/syria)

