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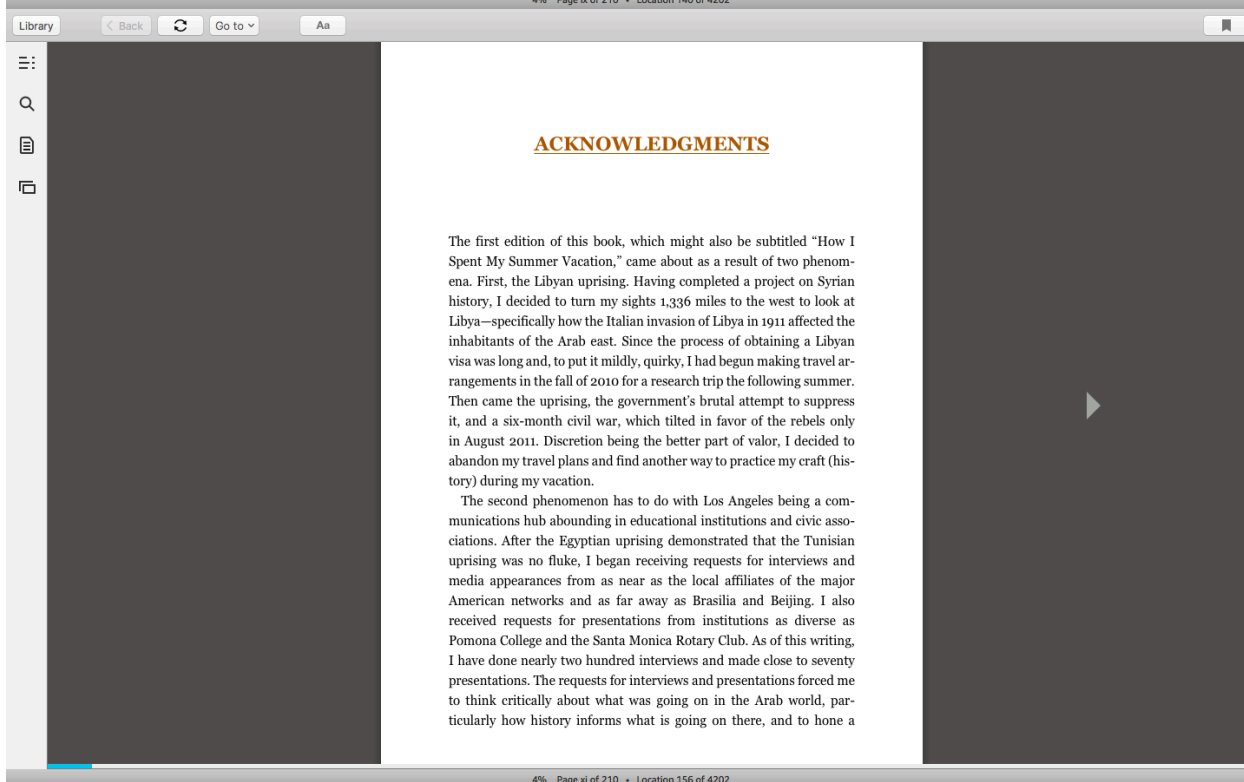
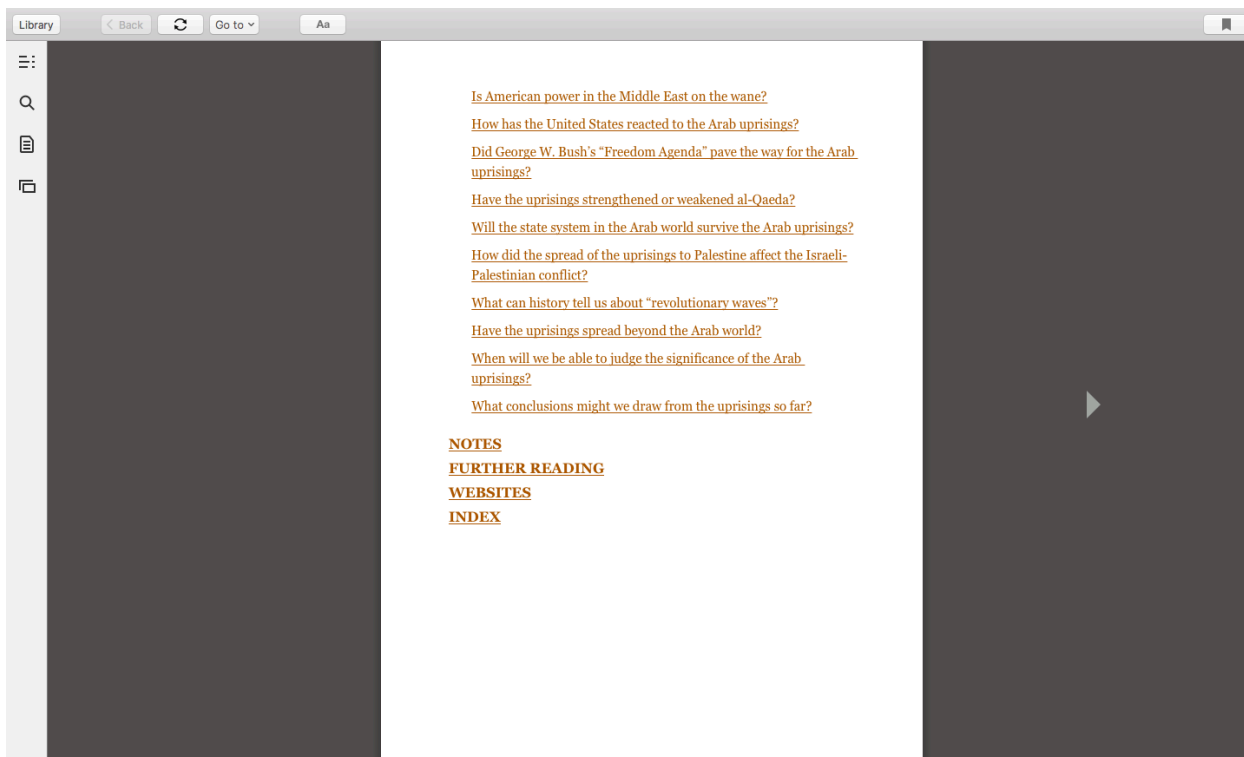
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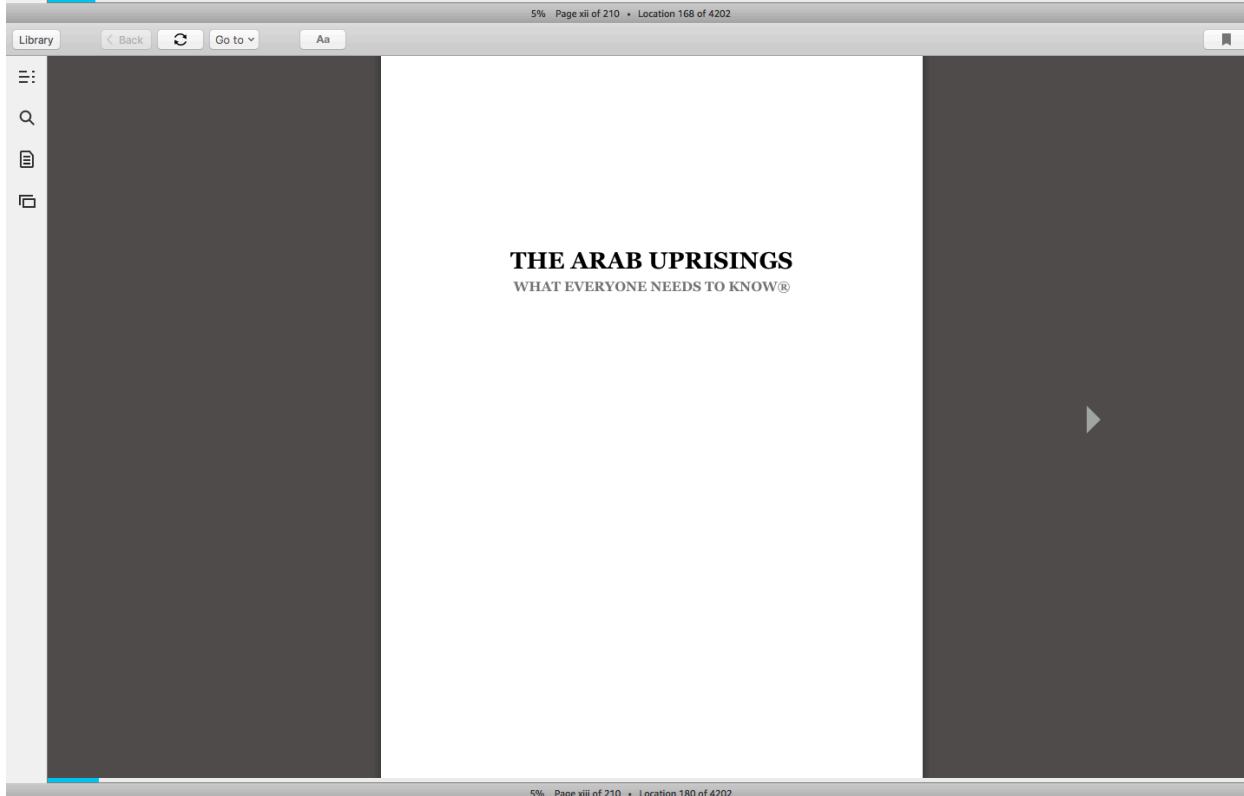
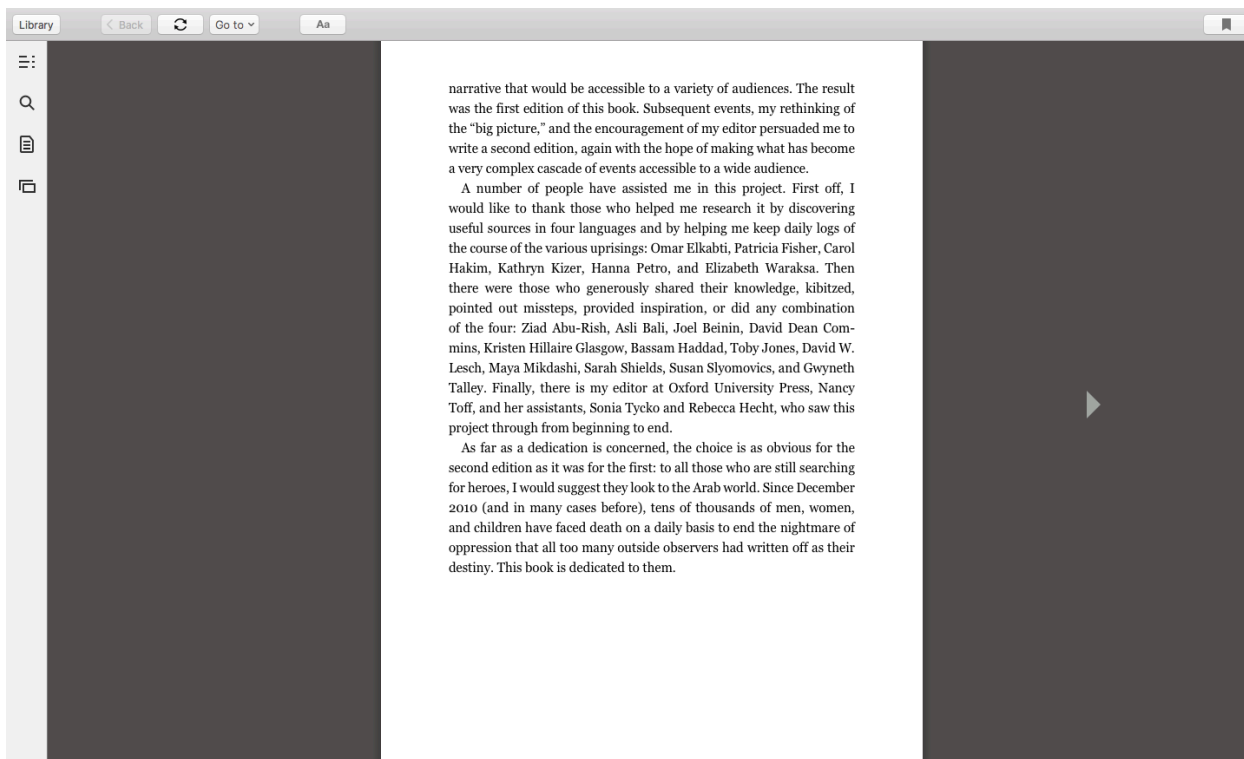
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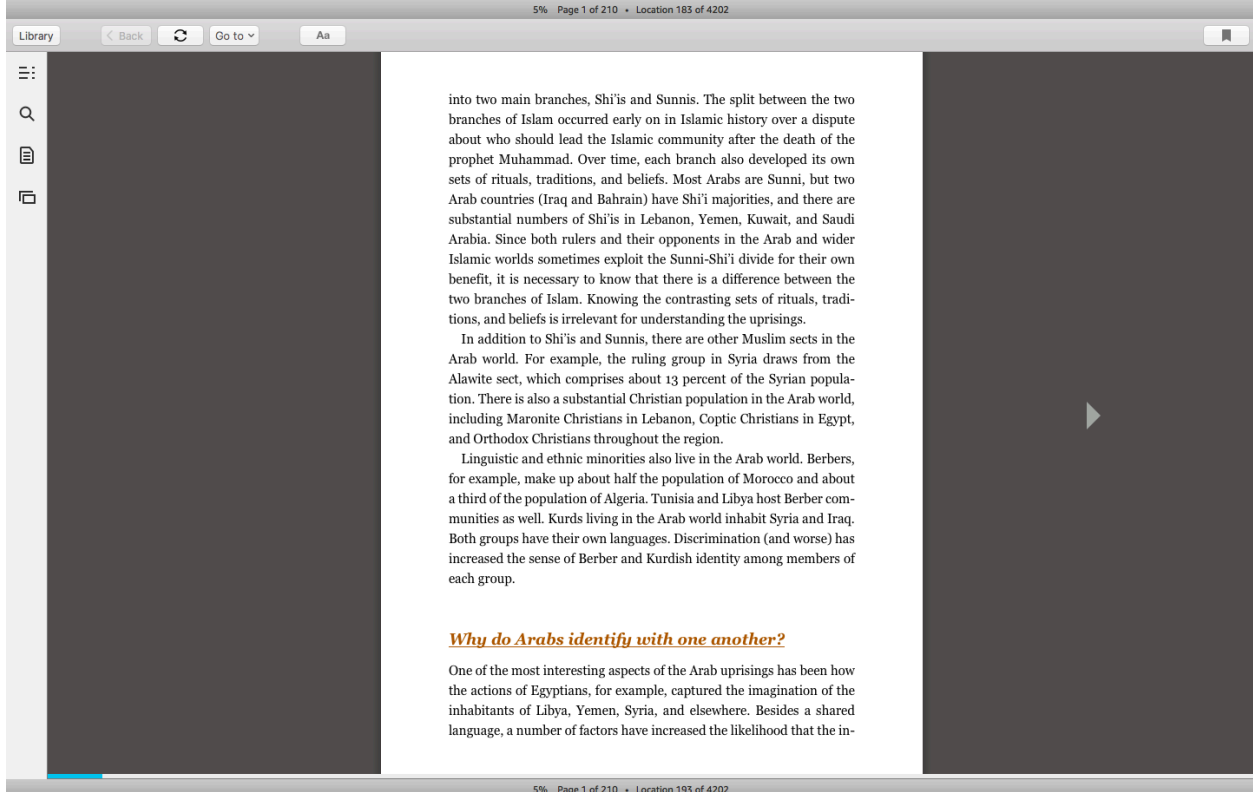
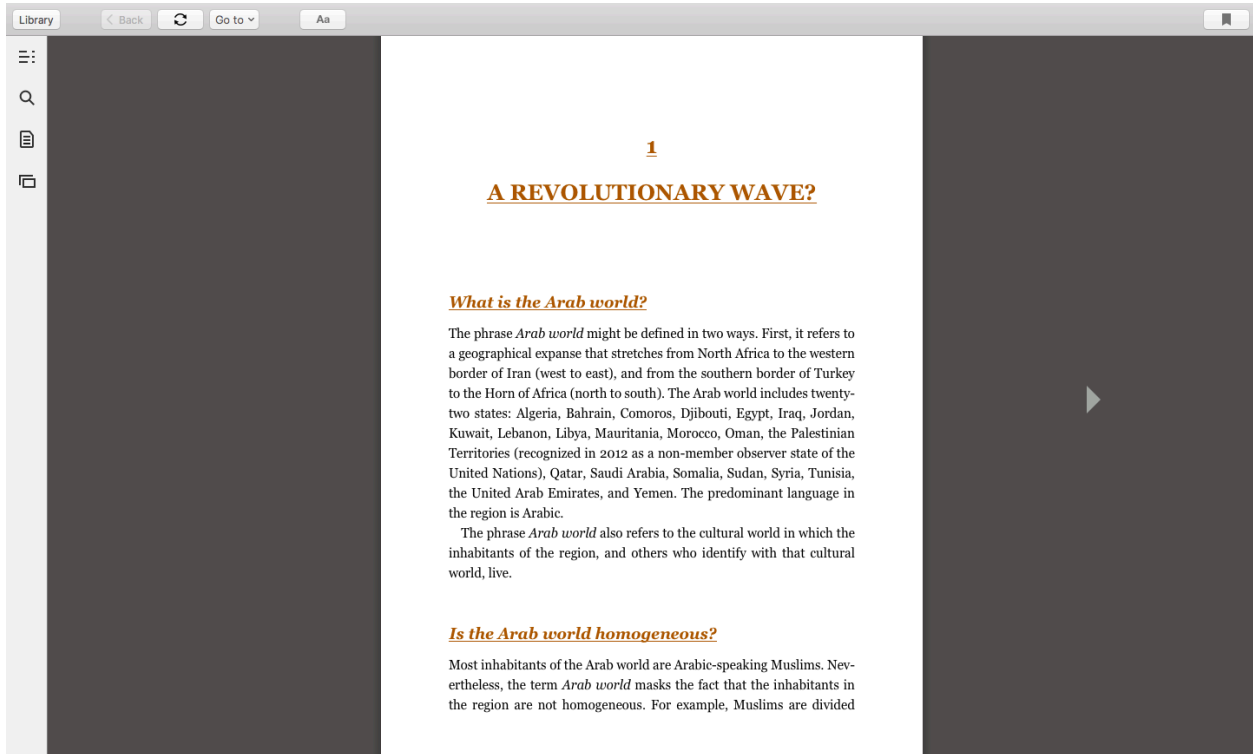
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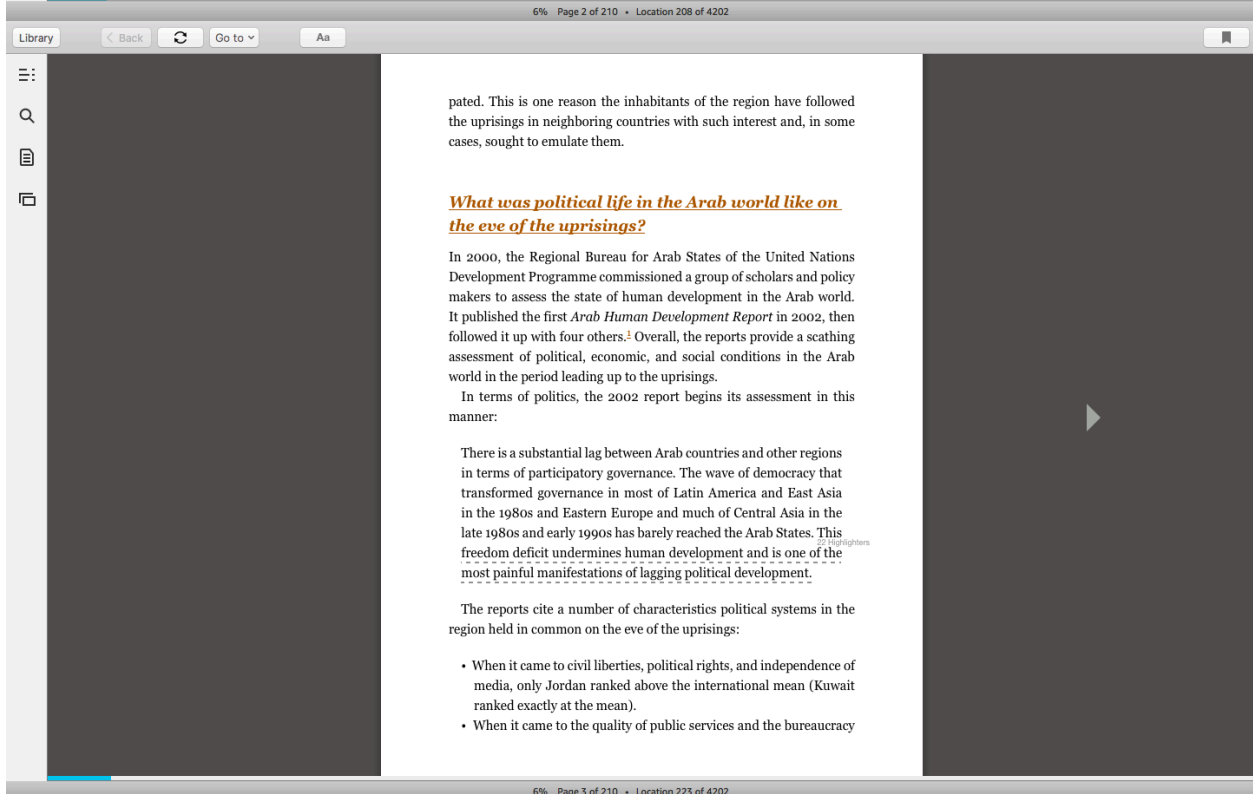
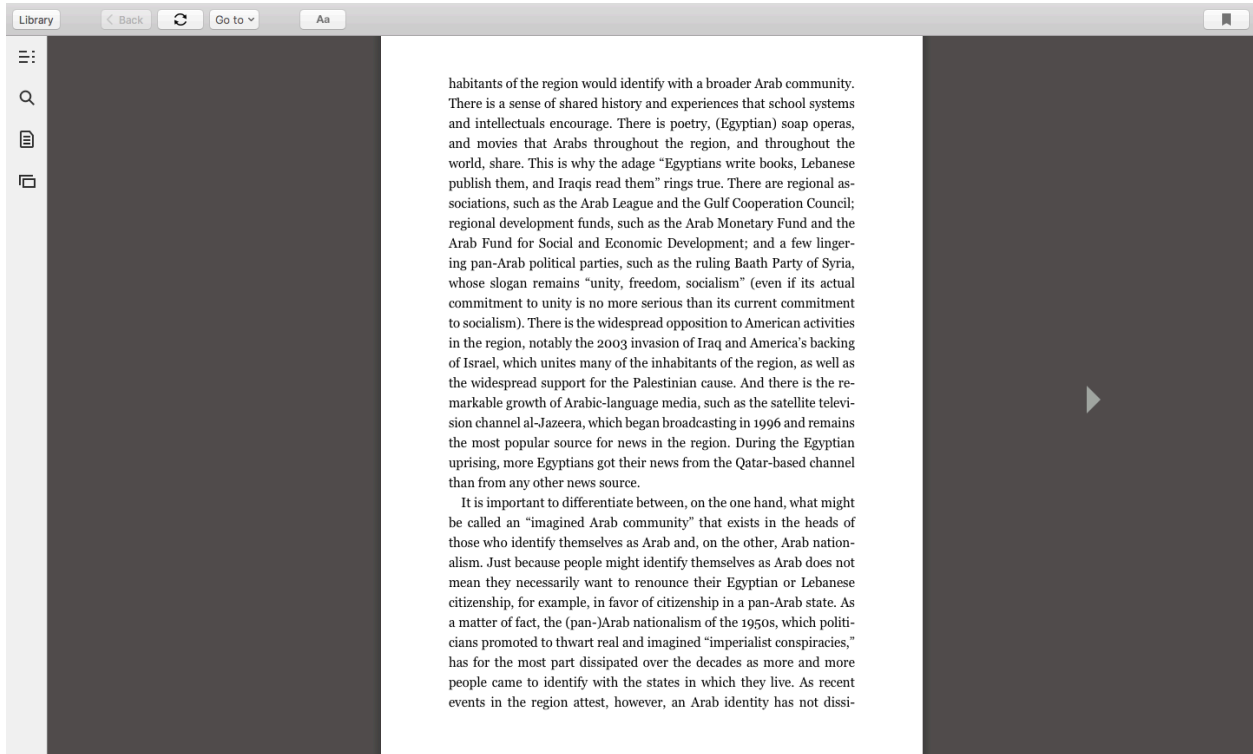
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and independence of civil service, only eight of the twenty Arab states surveyed ranked above the international mean.

- When it came to public perceptions of corruption (graft, bribery, cronyism), ten out of the seventeen Arab states surveyed ranked above the international mean.
- The 2004 report categorized almost all Arab states as “black-hole states,” in which the executive branch of the government is so powerful that it “converts the surrounding social environment into a setting in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes.”
- In states in which there was no dynastic succession (such as Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen), presidents regularly modified constitutionally mandated term limits. In Syria, the rubber-stamp parliament amended the constitution so that the underage son of the former president might assume the presidency.
- To garner support, most Arab governments resorted to the “legitimacy of blackmail” (more accurately rendered “legitimacy by blackmail”); that is, most presented themselves as the only bulwark standing between the citizenry and Islamism or chaos. (The terms *Islamism* and *Islamic movements* embrace a grab bag of associations, parties, and governments that seek to order their societies according to what they consider to be Islamic principles. The term *Islamist* refers to those who profess those principles. Some Islamists choose to participate in politics to achieve this end; others do not. Some believe Islamic principles provide them with a strict roadmap to be followed without deviation; others treat those principles more gingerly.)
- Most Arab states tightly restricted the formation of political parties. For example, interior ministers or government committees in Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, and Jordan had to authorize the formation of any new party. The Gulf states and Libya dealt with the issue of political parties simply by banning them.
- Seventeen of the nineteen Arab states surveyed required newspa-

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pers to be licensed; there was pre-censorship in eleven states.

- Syrians had been living under a state of emergency since 1963, Egyptians since 1981, Algerians since 1992, Iraqis since 2004, Palestinians since 2007, and Sudanese since 2008 (2005 in the Darfur region of Sudan). A state of emergency strips citizens of such fundamental rights as habeas corpus and the right to assemble, authorizes extraordinary courts and suspension of constitutions, and expands even further the powers of the bloated executive branch of government. Although some constitutions guaranteed such fundamental rights as the sanctity of the home and freedom of expression, most guarantees of this kind were empty promises. In some states, the constitution was ambiguous when it came to rights. Other constitutions delegated the definition of rights to the government. And still other constitutions subordinated rights to an official ideology (such as to the principles of Arab socialism) or national unity.
- In its 2008 report, the Arab Organization for Human Rights cited seven states—Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait—and the governing authorities in the West Bank and Gaza for regularly torturing interned prisoners; the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights also threw in Algeria, Bahrain, Morocco, and Tunisia, for good measure.
- “State security courts,” operating with unclear jurisdictional limits, imprecise procedural guidelines, and no oversight, existed in a number of Arab states. Not that it always mattered: eleven states (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen) allowed extrajudicial detentions.

As far as political participation is concerned, on the eve of the uprisings *The Economist* reported that not one Arab state fit into the categories of “full” or even “flawed” democracies according to its annual “Democracy Index.”<sup>23</sup> The highest ranked Arab state was Lebanon,

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whose score placed it no. 86 among 163 states worldwide. Along with Palestine and Iraq (nos. 93 and 111, respectively), it was one of only three states in the region that fell into the category "hybrid democracies." In hybrid democracies, elections have substantial irregularities, there is widespread corruption, and civil society is weak. *The Economist* placed the remaining nineteen members of the Arab League within the category of "authoritarian regimes." Of these, the lowest ranked was Saudi Arabia, which tied with Equatorial Guinea for the dubious distinction of sixth most undemocratic state in the world. Overall, the Arab world had the lowest composite score of any region.

**Why have authoritarian governments been so common in the Arab world?**

For years, historians and political scientists speculated about the cultural or social origins of authoritarianism in the Arab world. Some pointed to Islam, arguing that it was not compatible with democracy or human rights. Others looked to family structure, arguing that a state dominated by a single (male) figure simply reproduced the patriarchy of the typical Arab family.

Today, few historians and social scientists take these explanations, or any single explanation, seriously. There is no reason to assume that Islam is any more or less compatible with democracy and human rights than Christianity or Judaism, for example. There is also no reason to assume that all Muslims approach their Islam in the same way, read the same meanings into their Islam, or even apply at all principles derived from Islam in their daily lives. Then there are counterexamples, such as Indonesia (the world's most populous Muslim country) and Turkey; both are democracies, although with flaws (increasingly noticeable in the case of Turkey). And a state is not simply a family writ large.

Although there is no single explanation for the prevalence of authoritarian governments in the Arab world, historians and political scientists

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have offered two partial explanations with which many experts agree. The first has to do with the Arab state's control over resources, the second with American foreign policy.

States in the Arab world are highly dependent on a source of revenue called by economists "rent." Economists define rent as income acquired by states from sources other than taxation. Some economists call states that are dependent on rent for a certain proportion of their income "rentier states"; others call them "allocation states" because the states distribute the rent they receive to favored clients and projects.

The most lucrative source for rent in the Arab world is, of course, oil. Some Arab states derive well over 90 percent of their revenues from oil. But even Arab states not usually associated with oil production, such as Egypt and Syria, have an inordinate dependence on rent. In 2010, rent accounted for 40 percent of Egypt's revenue and 50 percent of Syria's. In the case of the former, the sale of oil provided \$11 billion to the national treasury, but there were other sources of rent as well. These included American aid (about \$1.6 billion) and Suez Canal tolls (about \$5 billion). Syria has traditionally derived rent both from oil and from other states that fear its ability to cause trouble in the region (or that wish to encourage this ability).

In no other region of the world are states as dependent on rent as they are in the Arab world. And access to rent not only means that the state does not have to go hat in hand to its citizens for revenue, it also ensures that the state will be the dominant economic actor. This enables the state to attach itself to the population through ties of patronage. It also enables the state to buy off dissent. It was thus not out of character when, in the wake of the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt and unrest at home, other states in the Arab world attempted to bribe their populations by offering them social benefits, pay raises, or higher government subsidies on basic commodities in order to buy social peace. In sum, rent reinforces a relationship between the state and the citizens of the state that can be summed up in the phrase "benefits for

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compliance.”

The second partial explanation for the prevalence of authoritarian rule in the Arab world is American foreign policy. The United States did not have much of a policy toward the region until the immediate post–World War II period. American engagement with the region thus coincided with the onset of the cold war, which defined American goals there. Throughout the cold war, the United States sought to attain six goals in the region: prevent the expansion of Soviet influence; ensure Western access to oil; secure the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of a regional balance of power; promote stable, pro-Western states in the region; preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the state of Israel; and protect the sea lanes, lines of communications, and the like connecting the United States and Europe with Asia.

Authoritarian regimes were useful in achieving all these goals. For example, American policy makers believed only strong, authoritarian regimes could bring about the rapid economic development necessary to prevent their populations from “going communist.” Only strong, authoritarian regimes such as that in Egypt could sign peace treaties with Israel in the face of popular opposition to those treaties. And only strong, authoritarian regimes that maintained a regional balance of power could ensure the uninterrupted supply of oil to the United States and its allies.

American support for autocrats was both direct and indirect. The United States directly and indirectly supported military officers who seized power in states throughout the region from the late 1940s through the 1960s. For example, the United States backed (some say sponsored) the first post-independence coup d'état in Syria—the first coup in the Arab world following World War II—which overthrew a democratically elected government. And, of course, the United States directly and indirectly supported a host of autocratic kings and emirs. This began even before the end of World War II, when Saudi Arabia be-

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came the only neutral state to receive Lend-Lease assistance.

When the cold war ended, the United States maintained five of its six policy goals in the region; containing the Soviet Union, which was dismantled in 1991, was, of course, no longer necessary. Hence, the United States maintained its support for authoritarian regimes as well. Thus it was that the United States headed the coalition liberating Kuwait from Iraq in 1991. And after 9/11, the United States added another policy goal that turned out to be a further boon to friendly autocrats: the United States declared a global war on terrorism. Autocrats such as Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, and even Muammar Qaddafi of Libya managed to put themselves on the side of angels by agreeing to accept and interrogate under torture suspected terrorists (Mubarak), allow the United States to fight the war on terror on his country's soil (Saleh), and renounce weapons of mass destruction (Qaddafi). Although President George W. Bush announced his “freedom agenda” in 2003—a professed commitment to “drain the swamp where terrorism breeds”<sup>3</sup> by promoting democratic change in the region—the United States stuck with Mubarak and Saleh well past their expiration date.

***What was the state of the economy in the Arab world on the eve of the uprisings?***

The Arab world includes states such as Qatar, which in 2010 boasted an annual per capita income of \$88,232 (for the approximately 20 percent of the inhabitants who were citizens, not guest workers), and Yemen (whose population earned an annual per capita income of about \$1,000 the same year). Simply put, states in the Arab world run the gamut when it comes to wealth and poverty. Overall, oil exporters tend toward the wealthy side of the spectrum, while states whose primary source of income is not oil tend toward the poorer side. It is thus difficult to generalize about economic conditions. But it is also necessary to

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try, since the uprisings that have spread throughout the Arab world are about economic as well as political conditions. This is the reason why autocrats commonly attempted to prevent or defuse protests by making economic concessions to their populations—a sure sign that they recognize the role played by economic issues in promoting dissatisfaction.

In his address on the uprisings in May 2011, President Barack Obama made the point that economic assistance to Tunisia and Egypt would be necessary to ensure a smooth transition to democracy. He also stated that such assistance would be a topic at the upcoming meeting of eight industrialized countries (the G-8). In preparation for that meeting, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) put together a report on the state of the economies in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>4</sup> The report paints a fairly bleak picture:

- Over the course of the previous three decades, the growth of the GDP in the region averaged 3 percent, while the GDP in the rest of the developing world grew at the rate of 4.5 percent. (GDP—or gross domestic product—is the total market value for finished goods and services produced within a state or territory.) Between 1980 and 2010, per capita GDP grew at a rate of 0.5 percent annually, well below that of the 3 percent growth that marked the rest of the developing world. To absorb the unemployed and new entrants to the job market, the annual GDP would have to grow at a rate of 7.5 percent.
- With the exception of oil and gas, exports have remained flat in recent decades. The remainder of the developing world has more than doubled its share of the international market since 1980. The situation looks even worse when exports from oil importers in the region are compared with exports from other regions. In 2009, their exports reached only 28 percent of GDP, compared with 56 percent for the Asia Pacific region.
- Close to 60 percent of the region's exports go to Europe. This indicates two problems. First, the only comparative advantage the

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region has is its proximity to Europe. Second, the region is isolated from the global economy in general and from emerging markets such as China in particular. (Other sources assert that outside sub-Saharan Africa, the region is the least globalized in the world.)

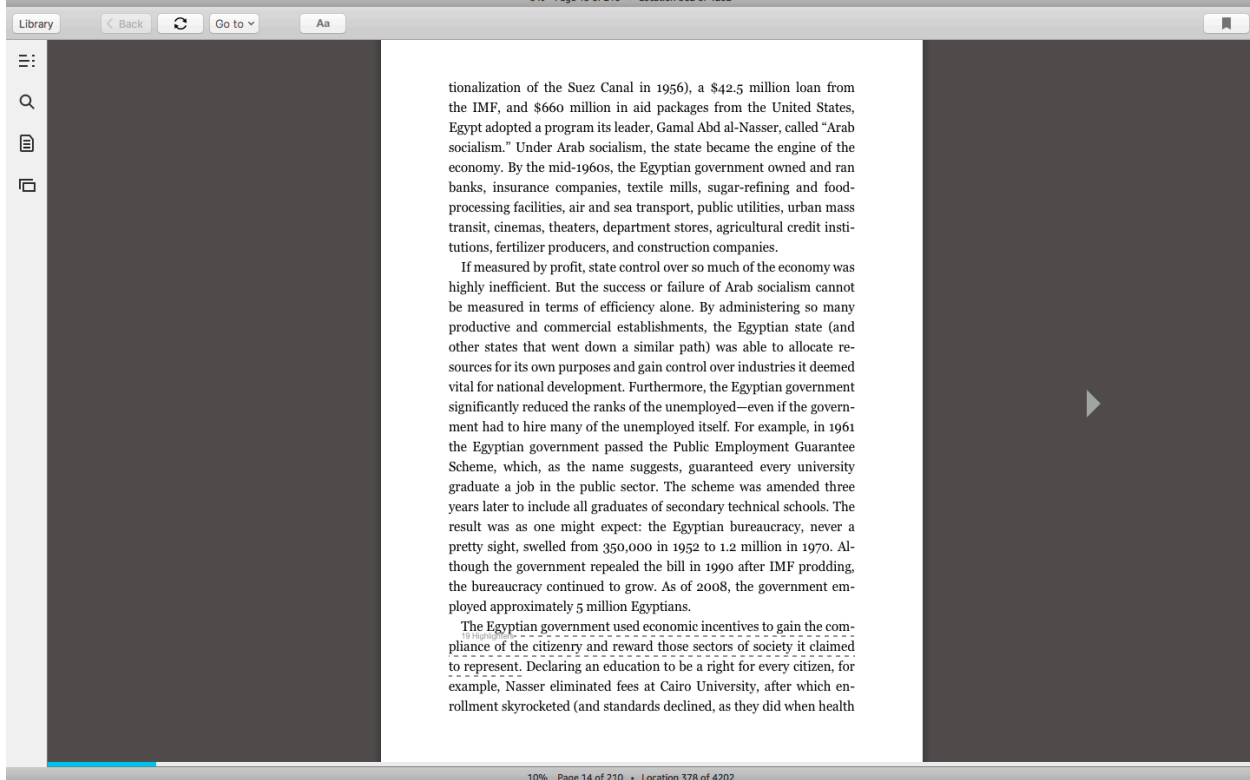
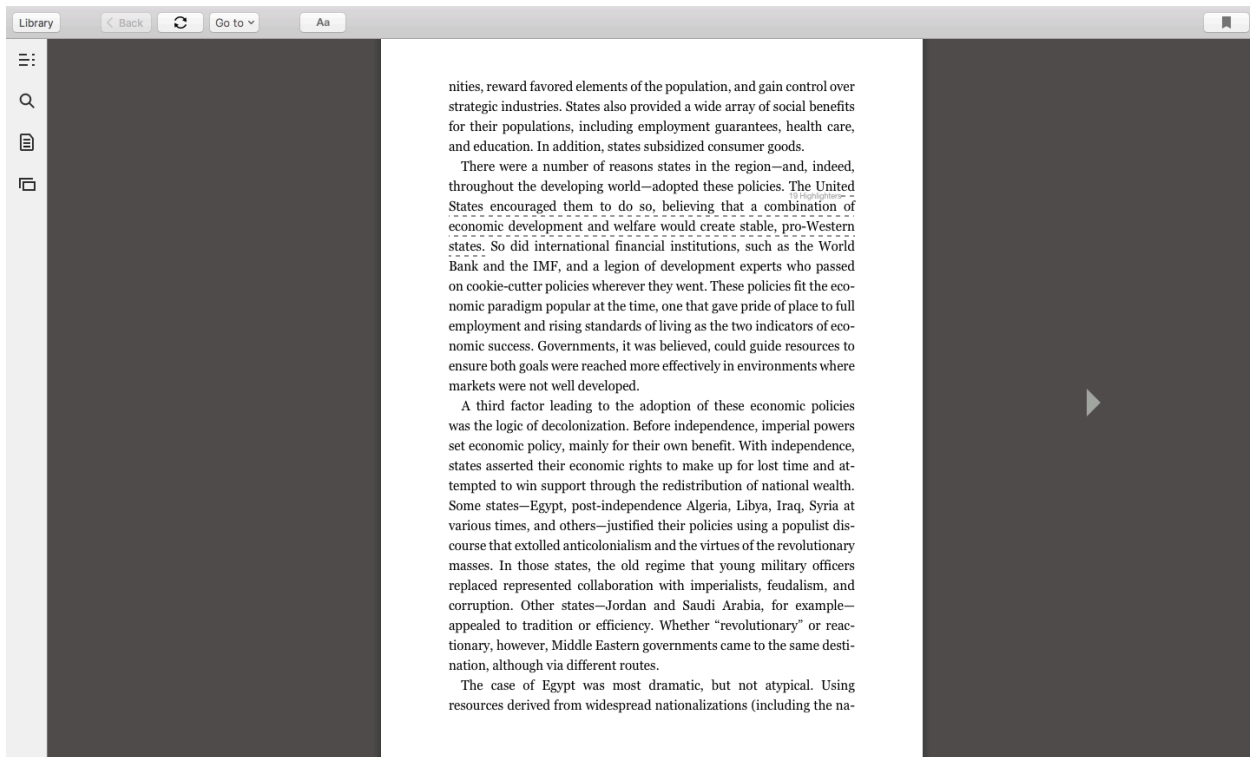
- The number of jobs grew 2 percent annually between 2000 and 2007. Overall, unemployment in countries for which data are available—Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Tunisia—hovered between 10 and 12 percent (other sources put the unemployment rate as high as 15 percent).
- Overall, the report asserted that oil importing states would need foreign grants and loans to the tune of \$160 billion during 2011–2013 to meet their obligations.

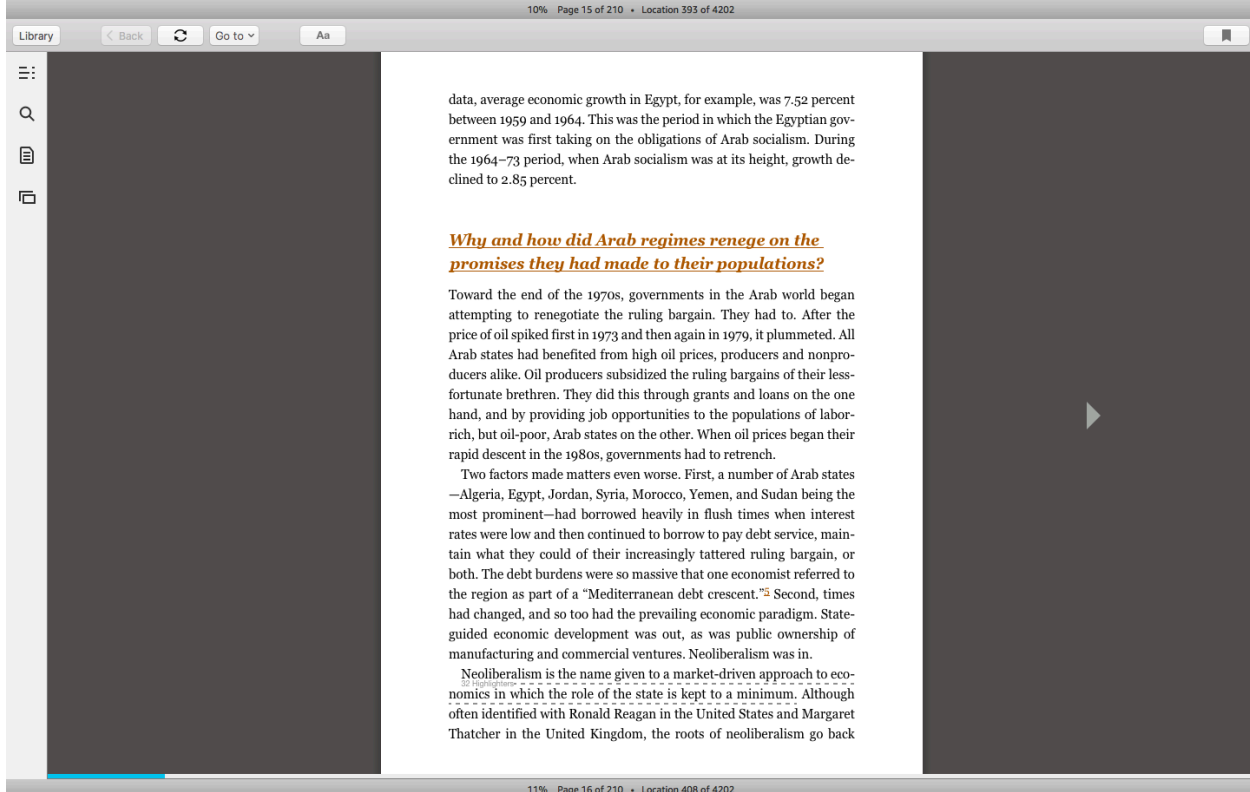
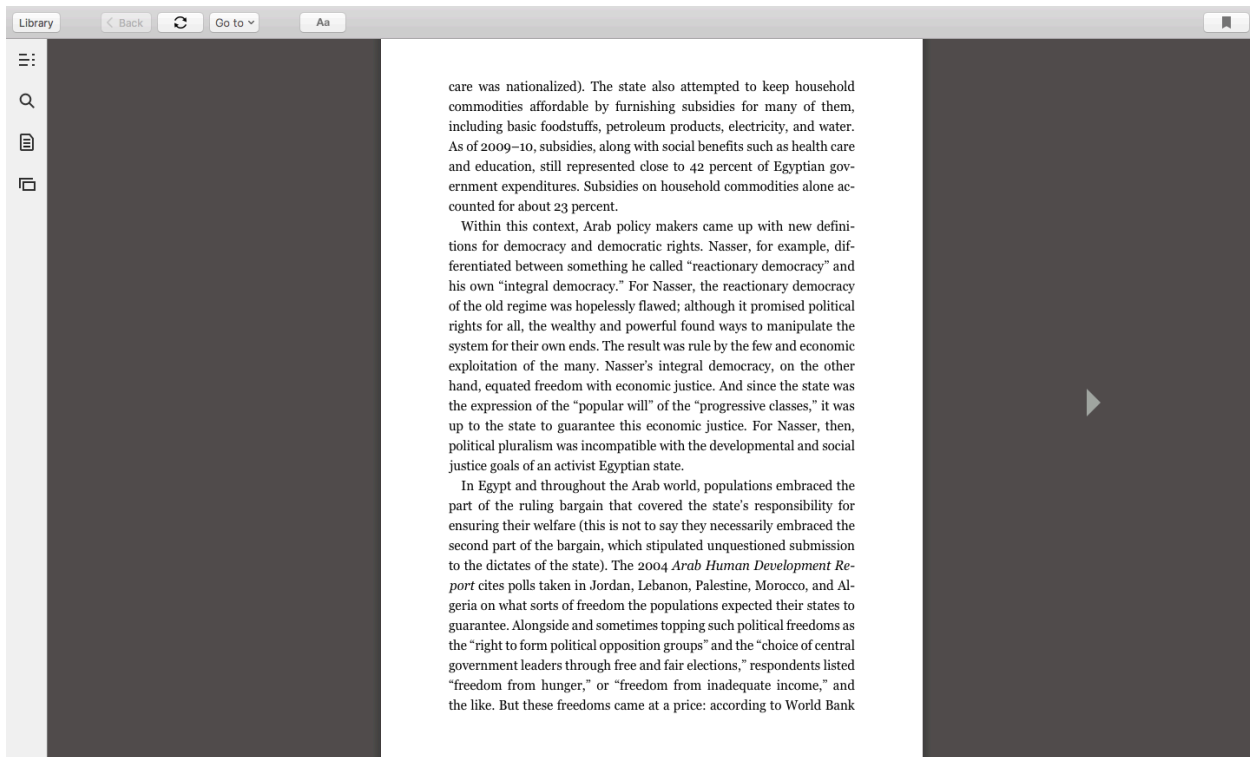
**What benefits did Arab regimes originally promise their populations?**

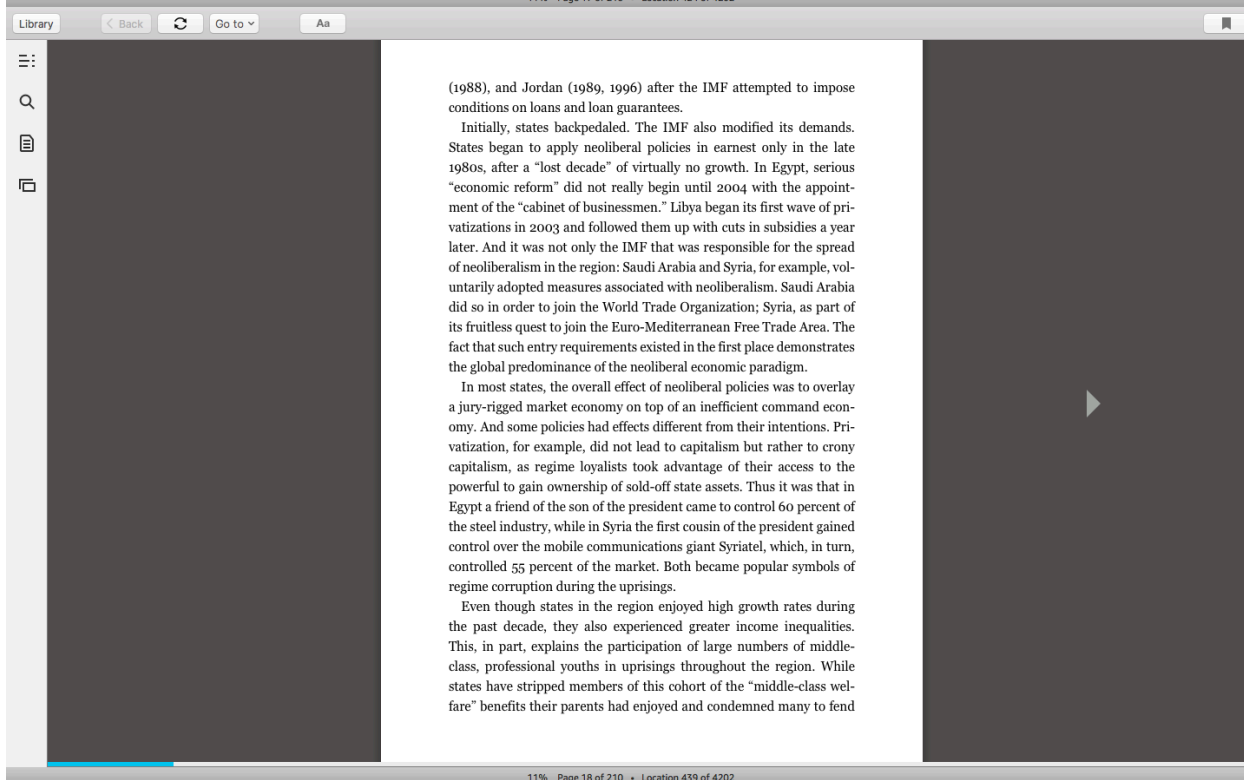
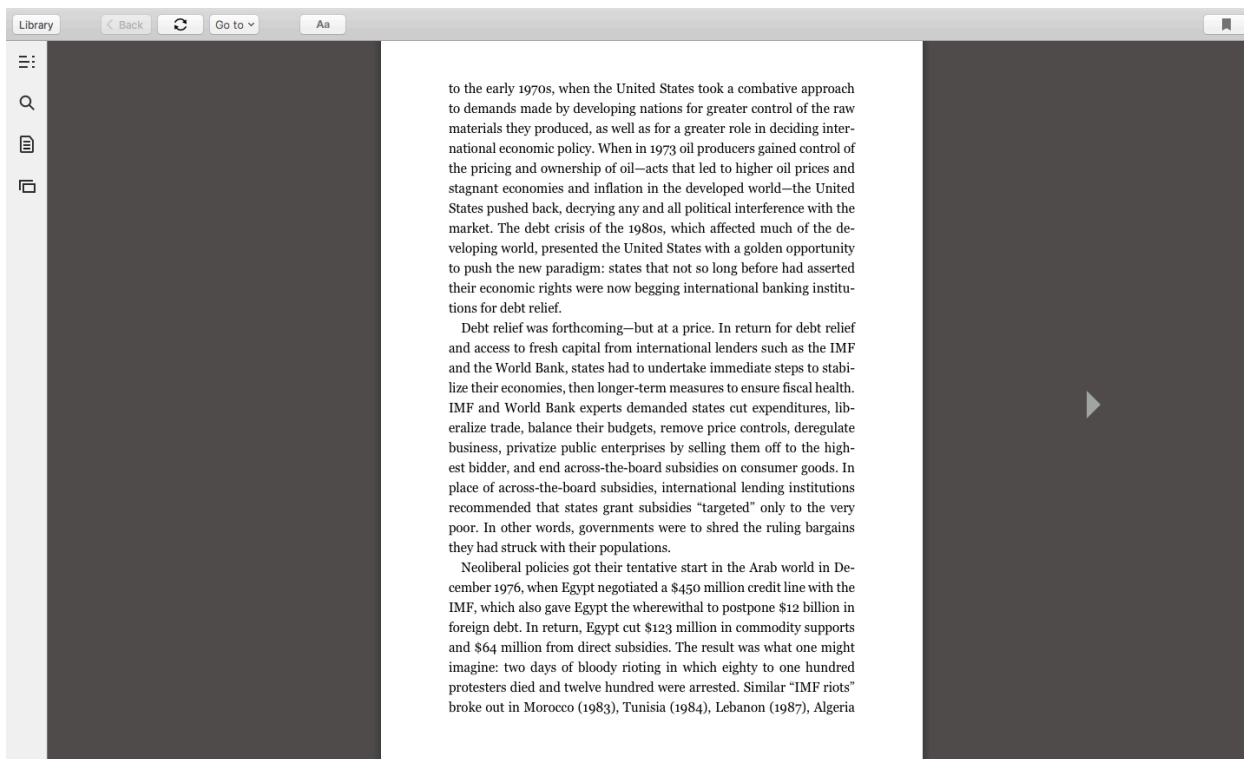
Most states in the Arab world received their independence at roughly the same time, during the post–World War II period. There was variation in government forms, of course. In many cases, although not all, this had to do with the identity of the colonial power that had been present before independence. The British, the preeminent power in Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the Gulf, generally left behind monarchies (Egypt was a kingdom until 1953, Iraq until 1958). The French, the preeminent power in North Africa, Syria, and Lebanon, left behind a short-lived monarchy in Tunisia and another in Morocco, along with republics elsewhere.

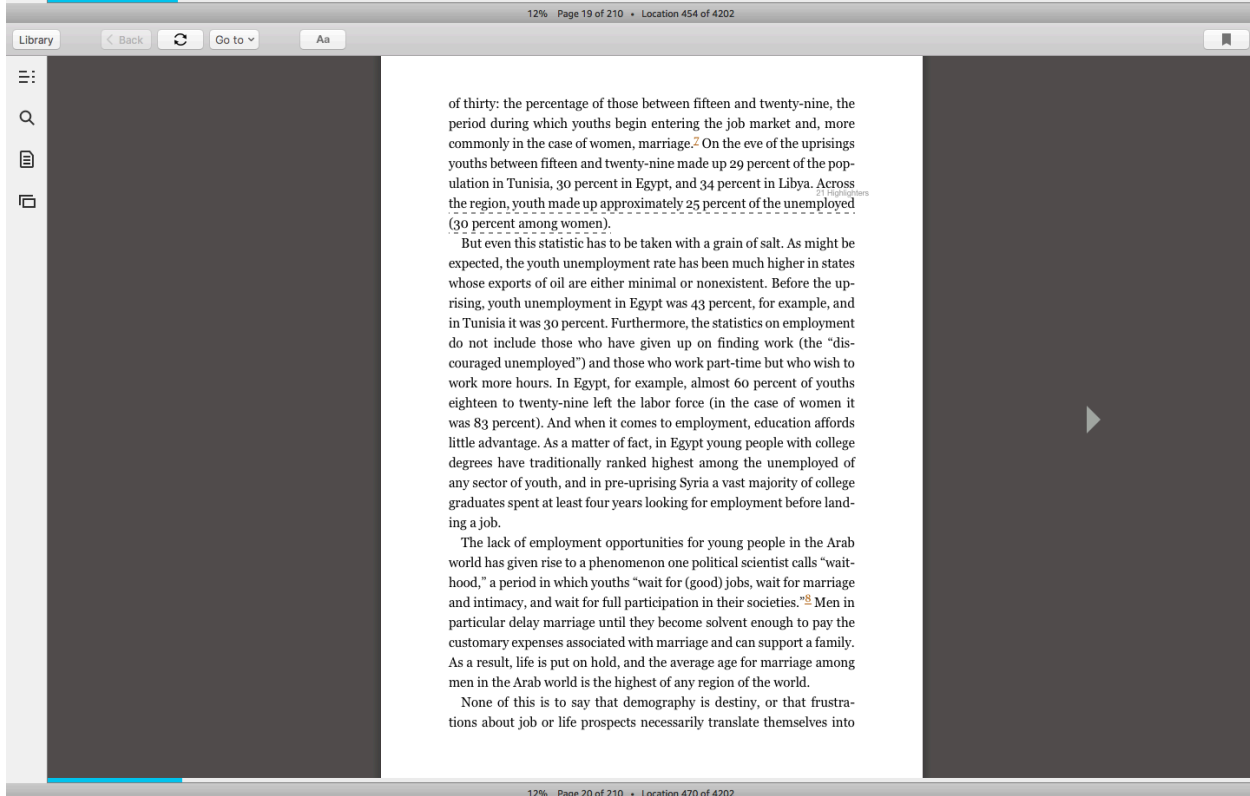
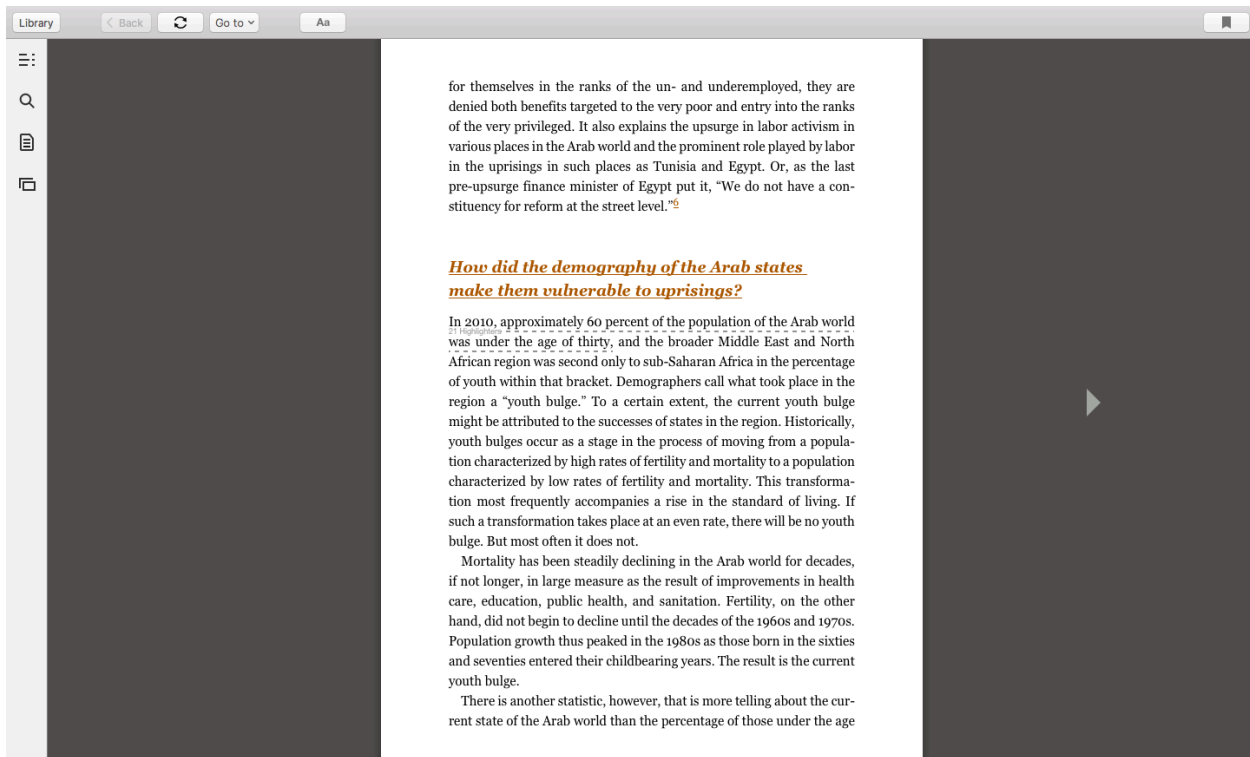
In spite of the variation in government forms, however, the ruling bargains states struck with their populations were roughly the same. (The term *ruling bargain* is a metaphor used by political scientists to refer to the accommodation reached between states and the citizens they govern.) States played a major role in the economy. They did this to force-march economic development, expand employment opportu-

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rebellion. A 2010 survey of youth around the world found that Egyptian youths, for example, with all their demographic baggage, ranked alongside their cohort in Jordan, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Russia as the *least* likely to participate in oppositional politics among youth populations globally. As of 2004, Vietnam had a youth unemployment rate of under 5 percent, and Russia a rapidly graying population—very different profiles from that of Egypt. Furthermore, youth was hardly the only segment of Arab populations that mobilized during the uprisings. Nevertheless, by 2010 there was a cohort of youth throughout the Arab world with grievances. Under the proper circumstances, this cohort was available to be mobilized for oppositional politics.

***How did a food crisis make Arab states vulnerable to uprisings?***

In January 2011, the Japanese investment bank Nomura compiled a list of the twenty-five countries that would be “crushed” in a food crisis.<sup>2</sup> The Arab world was well represented on the list: Tunisia came in at number eighteen, with Libya at sixteen, Sudan at eight, Egypt at six, Lebanon at five, Algeria at three, and Morocco at two. To understand the full effects of these numbers, consider that the portion of household spending that went to pay for food in the countries on the list ranges from an average of 34 percent in Lebanon to an average of 63 percent in Morocco. The average percentage of household spending that goes to pay for food in the United States is about 7 percent—a figure that includes eating as entertainment, that is, dining outside the home.

There are two main reasons for the vulnerability of states in the Arab world to a food crisis. First, even though the region contains two areas that have historically been associated with agricultural plenty —“Mesopotamia,” the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq, and the Nile valley in Egypt—agricultural conditions throughout much of the region are harsh, populations are rising, and water ta-

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bles have diminished.

Only two countries in the Arab world had reached the level of food self-sufficiency before 2006: Syria and Saudi Arabia. Then four consecutive years of drought made Syria a food importer rather than the food exporter it had been. Investment in agriculture had enabled Saudi Arabia to become a food exporter, and for a brief period in the early 1990s Saudi Arabia was the world’s sixth largest exporter of grain. After the outbreak of the Gulf War in 1991, however, the Saudi government began diverting much of the money it had spent to subsidize agriculture to military procurement. In 2008, the government abandoned its grain cultivation program entirely, and two years later it was contemplating building a new Red Sea port geared toward handling imports of wheat and barley. Now all Arab countries are net food importers, and Egypt is the world’s largest importer of wheat.

The other factor that has contributed to making the region vulnerable to a food crisis is neoliberal economic policies. As governments strove to avoid intervening in markets to fix prices or manipulate the exchange rates of their currencies, populations had to face fluctuations in international food prices on their own. In addition, the neoliberal policies that compelled governments to abandon across-the-board subsidies on food and replace them with subsidies targeted to the very poor have diminished food security for a wide swath of the population. They have also fueled popular anger when food prices go up. In 2007, for example, when prices began to climb, bread riots spread throughout the region, from Morocco and Algeria to Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Given a choice between facing the ire of their populations and the ire of the IMF, governments chose the latter and increased subsidies and raised public sector wages. Egypt alone spent \$3 billion for subsidies on food.

The increase in the price of food that the region began experiencing in 2007 turned out not to be a fluke. Between 2007 and the beginning of 2011, the price of food doubled on international markets, and as of

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March 2011 food prices had risen for eight consecutive months. Economists have given a number of reasons for the price increases. There is the increased acreage American, European, and Brazilian farmers have given over to the production of biofuels. In the United States alone, more than one-quarter of the 2010 grain harvest went to biofuel. (Rather than offering Tunisians and Egyptians IMF and World Bank assistance to further neoliberal policies in their countries, which President Obama did in his May 2011 speech to the Arab world, he might have offered them a very different type of remedy to their plight: an end to federal subsidies for the cultivation of corn for biofuel in the United States.)

Climate change, which has had its most dramatic effect on Russia in 2010, has also affected food prices. As a result of a heat wave, the Russian wheat harvest declined by 40 percent and Russia halted its grain exports. Russia had been Egypt's largest supplier of wheat.

In addition, some economists cite the changing patterns of consumption in emerging economies, particularly China. As the standard of living in China has risen, so has meat consumption. And although estimates of how many pounds of corn are required to produce one pound of beef vary widely, there is no denying that the production of more beef requires more corn.

Finally, economists cite the effects of dollar inflation on food prices. As in the case of all internationally traded commodities, the price of grain is denominated in dollars, and when the value of the dollar declined in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008 the price of grain rose.

Whatever the causes, however, the fact remains that at the point at which the uprisings began and spread throughout the Arab world, the question of the vulnerability of the region to such a crisis was no longer theoretical.

**Why did populations wanting change in the**

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**Arab world have to take to the streets?**

The first Arab uprising, which broke out in Tunisia, took place a little over two years after the onset of the economic crisis of 2008. The intervening period had not been a good one for governments throughout the world, which found themselves caught between bankers and economists recommending austerity on the one hand, and populations fearing the end of the welfare state they had come to know on the other.

As the Arab uprisings spread, populations in other regions continued to show their dissatisfaction with those who governed them. They voted out ruling parties in the United Kingdom, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Iceland, Slovakia, Canada, The Netherlands, France, and Italy, among other countries. In the United States, elections first threw out a Republican president, then a Democratic congress. And throughout Europe protesters and rioters took to the streets to prevent governments from cutting workers' pay and unemployment benefits, increasing the retirement age and cutting pensions, and eliminating bonuses to families having children. Yet through it all, not one government was overthrown, nor were political institutions uprooted. Blame fell on politicians and parties and the policies they pushed.

Now turn to the Arab world, where political institutions are weak and the lines separating the ruler, the ruling party, and ruling institutions (from the party congresses and "parliaments" to the military and intelligence services) are often blurred, if they exist at all. In most cases, popular representatives cannot be turned out of office because there are no popular representatives. In those few cases where there are, their power is limited. This is why populations throughout the region took to the streets as their first option. This also explains why the most common slogan during the uprisings was "Down with the *nizam*" (regime, system, order), and not "Down with the government."

**Can we pinpoint the factors that caused the**

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### ***uprisings?***

Unilateral attempts by regimes to renegotiate ruling bargains, demographic challenges, a food crisis, and brittleness made autocracies in the Arab world vulnerable, but they did not cause the uprisings. To attribute the uprisings to these factors or to any others overlooks a key variable—the human element—that determines whether an uprising will or will not occur. It also makes it seem that once a set of conditions is met, people will automatically respond in determined ways.

In the past, for example, it was common for historians and political scientists to attempt to connect uprisings with changes in economic conditions. In some cases (as in the case of the French Revolution of 1789) they have tracked the increase in the price of bread during the years leading up to the revolution and argued that the increase led to (in other words, caused) the revolution. Others, demonstrating that you can argue almost anything in the social sciences and get away with it, have asserted just the opposite. Uprisings, they claim, take place when a sudden reversal disrupts a period of improving economic conditions, thereby frustrating popular expectations.

The problem with both theories is that they cannot explain the countless times in which conditions for an uprising are met but no uprising occurs. For example, Americans did not rebel after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 when the economy suddenly collapsed; nor did they rebel in 1937 when the economy again took a sharp nosedive after years of recovery. Nor can the theories account for the timing of uprisings, except with the telltale sentence, “After X years of hunger (or repression, or corruption), the people had had enough.” The problem is that unemployment and bread prices, for example, are objective categories that are quantifiable; the sense of deprivation or injustice—not to mention the compulsion to translate that sense into action—is not. To make matters even more unpredictable, people’s sense of deprivation changes as circumstances unfold. Thus they might suddenly discover a cause worth fighting for once their neighbors have taken to the streets.

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Then there is the role played by unexpected events that people might latch on to (or not) to reinterpret their circumstances in new ways. As we shall see, the unforeseen departure of the presidents of Tunisia and Egypt in the wake of popular protests changed the course of an ongoing protest movement in Yemen; troops firing on peaceful protesters in Bahrain revitalized that protest; and the arrest and torture of schoolchildren in a provincial city in Syria, followed by the murder of irate parents and their neighbors by security forces firing into a crowd, touched off a rebellion that no one had anticipated.

All this raises the issue of the predictability of uprisings in general and the predictability of the Arab uprisings in particular. Although many observers of the Arab world had turned their attention to the problem of why authoritarian regimes in the region seemed so durable, others predicted their demise. They pointed out the many problems, particularly economic, that Arab regimes faced and asserted that in a post-cold war world in which democracy and human rights had taken on a new lease on life, autocracies were just outmoded. The problem with these predictions was that they rarely offered up a timetable for events, and none foresaw the type of popular movement that swept through the region. Instead of envisaging masses of demonstrators shouting “Peaceful, peaceful” and demanding democratic rights, those who claimed to foresee the demise of regimes in the Arab world predicted that Islamists or disgruntled members of the regime would supply the shock troops for rebellion. Their predictions were thus like the proverbial stopped clock that tells the right time twice a day—except you do not know when that is.

No one really predicted the uprisings, but then no one could have done so. All rebellions—the Arab uprisings included—are by their nature unpredictable, as are the courses they take.

### ***What was the spark that ignited the Arab***

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### uprisings?

On December 17, 2010, a street vendor, Muhammad Bouazizi, set himself on fire in front of the local government building in Sidi Bouzid, a rural town in Tunisia. Earlier in the day, a policewoman had confiscated his wares and publicly humiliated him. He tried to complain at the local municipality, but to no avail.

The self-immolation touched off protests that reached Tunisia's capital by December 27. At first, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who had ruled for a quarter-century, tried to pacify the protesters. He promised three hundred thousand new jobs and new parliamentary elections. This did little to mollify them. On January 14, military and political leaders had enough, and with the army refusing to fire on the protesters Ben Ali fled the country, leaving it in the hands of a caretaker government.

The Tunisian uprising was the first in a series of cascading events that swept through the Arab world. About a week and a half after the departure of Ben Ali, young people, many of whom belonged to an organization called the "April 6 Youth Movement," began their occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo. The security forces and goons-for-hire failed to dislodge the protesters, and the army announced it would not fire on them. Strikes and antigovernment protests spread throughout Egypt. On February 11, the army took matters into its own hands. It deposed President Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled for thirty years, and established a new government under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

Events in Tunisia and Egypt demonstrated that Tunisian-style protest movements were viable elsewhere, and protests similar to those that had taken place in Tunisia and Egypt broke out in other places in the Arab world. After Egypt, young people in Yemen consciously adopted the Tunisian and Egyptian style of protests. In Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, kings who had presented themselves as "reformers" now faced demands for constitutional monarchies. Or-

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ganizers called for a "Day of Rage" in Libya after the arrest of a prominent human rights lawyer who represented families of the twelve hundred "disappeared" political prisoners who had been murdered in cold blood in a single incident in 1996. The regime met the protests with violence, precipitating a civil war between regime loyalists and self-designated "revolutionaries." A month later, it was Syria's turn. Although protests in the capital of Damascus modeled on those that had brought down autocrats in Tunisia and Egypt failed to gain traction, protests erupted throughout the country in the wake of ruthless regime violence.

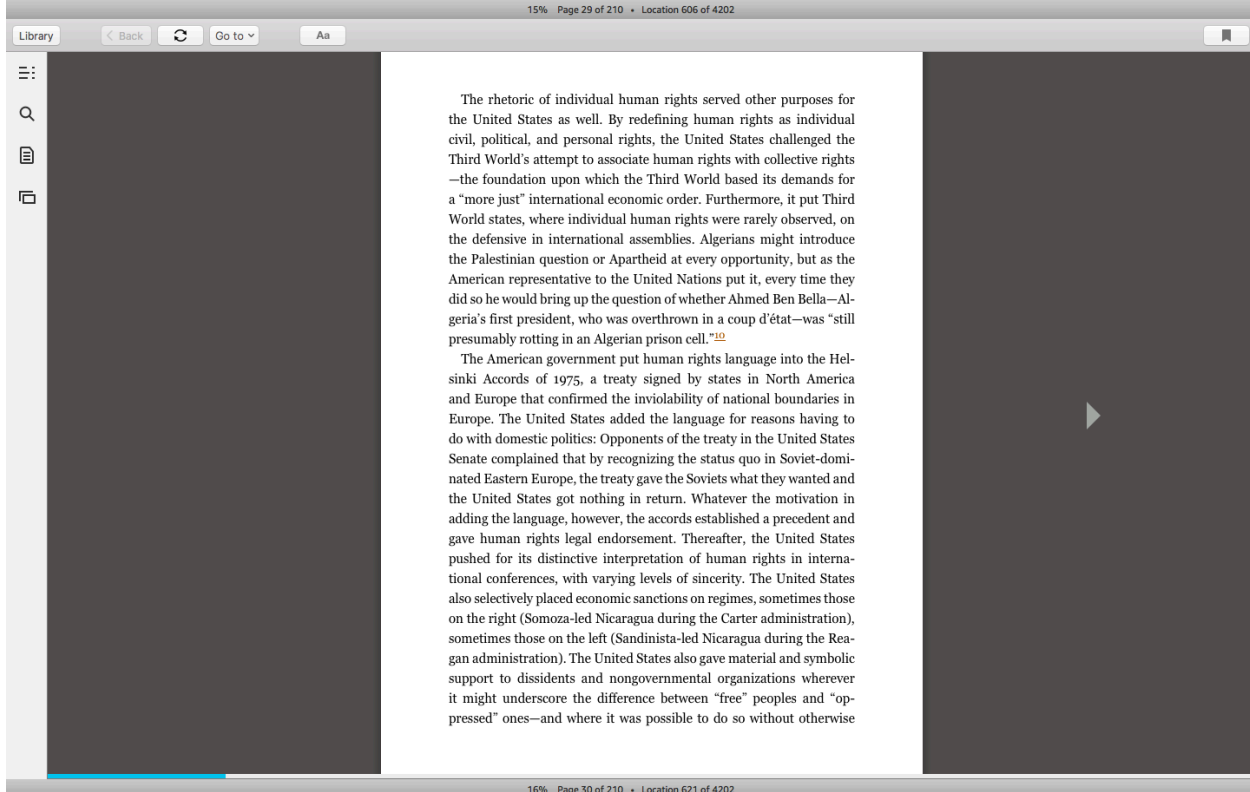
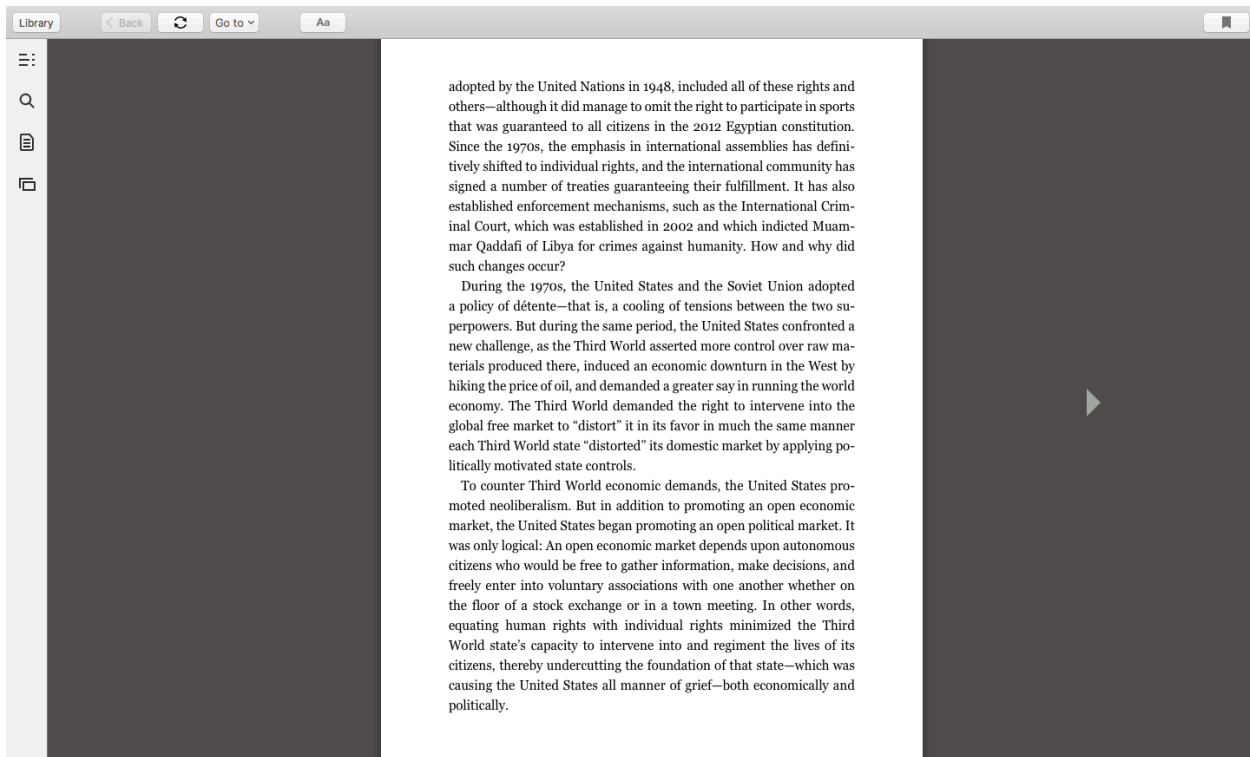
### Where did the demand for human and democratic rights come from?

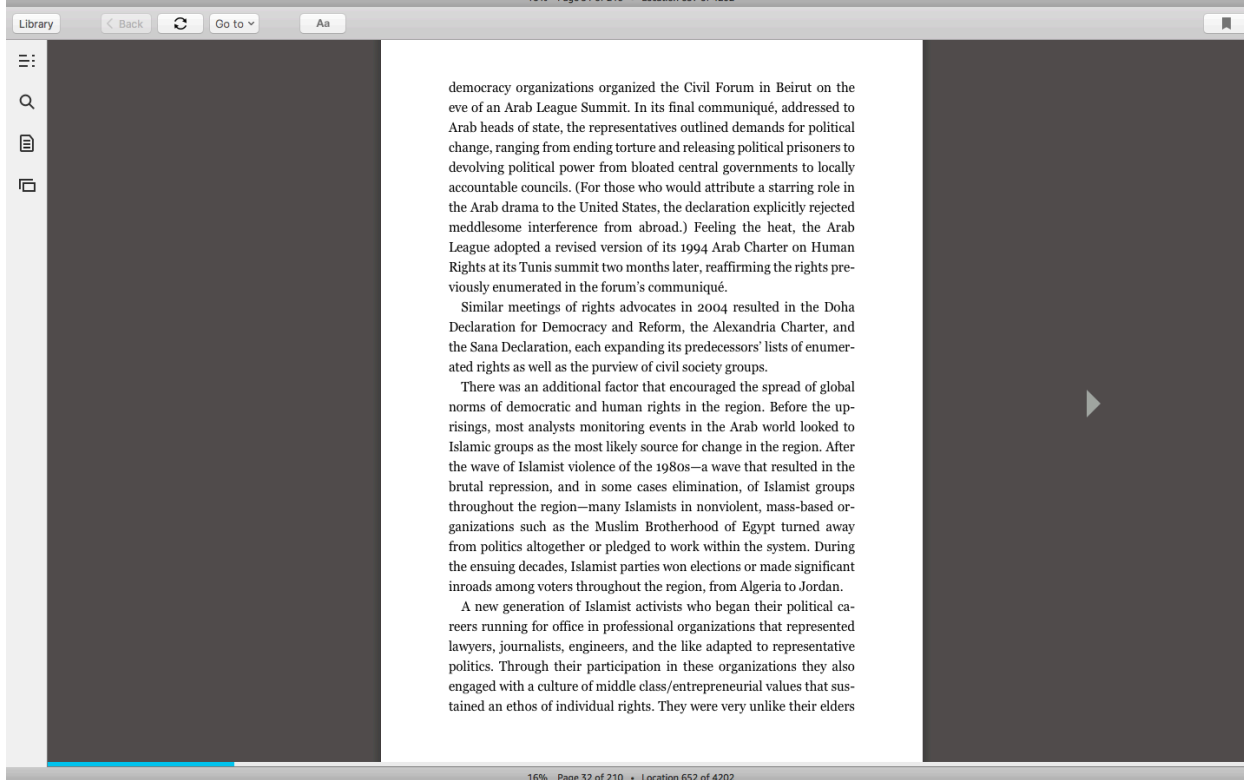
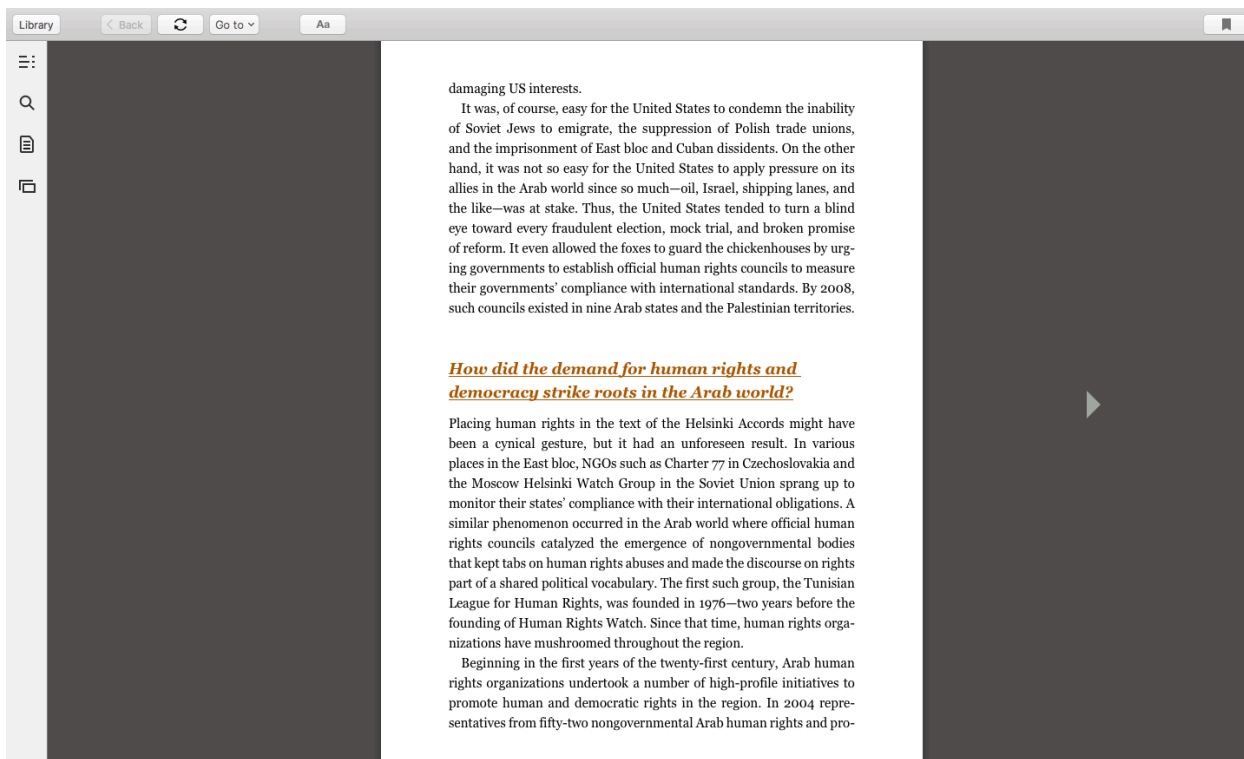
So far, I have identified four factors that made regimes in the Arab world vulnerable to the sort of protests and uprisings we have seen since December 2010: attempts by regimes to unilaterally renegotiate ruling bargains, demographic challenges, a food crisis, and regime brittleness. To this list we might add one other: the global diffusion of a distinct set of norms of human and democratic rights that took place over the course of the past forty years.

Historians debate the origins of the notion of human rights. Some go back to the "natural law philosophers" of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, others to the French Revolution. Regardless of when the notion first appeared, however, it is undeniable that during the 1970s the conception, enforcement, and status of human rights as a global norm underwent a revolutionary change.

Before the 1970s, for example, the phrase "human rights" conjured up a variety of associations: economic and social rights, championed by the Soviet Union and its allies; collective rights, such as the right to self-determination and the right to national development, championed by the colonized world; and individual civil, political, and personal rights, championed by the West. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

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whose political careers began with conspiracies hatched in prison.

By running in elections, Islamist parties in effect put their seal of approval on the democratic process. They also were forced to restructure themselves in a manner more appropriate to appeal to the masses. For both these reasons they removed themselves from effective leadership of any movement that sought radical change through extralegal means.

**How pervasive was the demand for human and democratic rights in the Arab world before the uprisings of 2010–11?**

Let it be thought that human rights and democratic governance did not attract widespread support, the numerous protests and uprisings that swept through the Arab world since the 1980s provide evidence to the contrary. Many of these protests and uprisings were cross-sectarian or nonsectarian and many included a broad coalition of Islamists, liberals, trade unionists, and leftists.

The demand for human rights, democratic governance, or both lay at the heart of the “Berber Spring” of 1980, the fight by Algeria’s largest ethnic minority for their rights. Eight years later, the Algerian “Black October” riots led to the first democratic elections (subsequently overturned) in the Arab world. The Bahraini *intifada* (Arabic for “shaking off,” now commonly used to mean rebellion) of 1994–99 began with a petition signed by one-tenth of Bahrain’s inhabitants demanding an end to emergency rule, the restoration of rights revoked by that rule, release of political prisoners, pardons for political exiles, and the expansion of the franchise to women. Petitioners also demanded a restoration of the 1973 constitution, which provided for a parliament in which two-thirds of the members were elected.

The death of Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad in 2000 spawned the rise of political salons throughout Syria. Participants in those salons expanded their movement through the circulation of the “Statement

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of the Ninety-nine,” then the “Statement of a Thousand,” which made many of the same demands made during the Bahraini *intifada*, along with multi-party elections and freedom of speech, assembly, and expression. Even after the “Damascus Spring” turned into the “Damascus Winter,” aftershocks of the mobilization continued. Among those aftershocks was the Damascus Declaration Movement of 2005, which (initially) united the secular and religious opposition in a common demand for democratic rights.

These movements were only the tip of the iceberg. Kuwait experienced two “color revolutions”—a “Blue Revolution” from 2002 to 2005, which won for Kuwaiti women the right to vote, and an “Orange Revolution” in 2006 to promote electoral reform. A number of secular and Islamist Egyptians banded together in 2004 to form a group called “Kefaya” (“Enough”), which called on Mubarak to resign. In Morocco, popular agitation led to the establishment of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission in 2004 to investigate human rights abuses that had occurred during the previous thirty years—the “Years of Lead.” Lebanese took to the streets in 2005 in the so-called Cedar Revolution, demanding the withdrawal of Syrian forces from that unfortunate country and parliamentary elections free from Syrian interference. In 2004, 2008, and 2010 Kurdish citizens protested for minority rights in Syria. And the list goes on.

This history of mass agitation for human and democratic rights that swept the region for thirty years once again raises the question of why no one saw the eruption of 2010–11 coming. The answer is probably that observers who were focused on the wars being waged between Arab regimes and their Islamist opponents viewed each protest as an anomaly, driven by local issues, and not part of a pattern or wave. With 20/20 hindsight, we now know better.

**How appropriate is the word “wave” to describe**

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### *the spread of protests throughout the Arab world in 2010–11?*

It has become very common to describe what has been occurring in the Arab world in terms of a “wave of protests,” a “revolutionary wave,” or even a “pro-democracy wave.” The use of the wave metaphor is not a new one; historians have written about the “revolutionary wave” that engulfed Europe in 1848 and the one that engulfed the world in 1968 so often that it has become a cliché. Similarly, political scientist Samuel Huntington discussed three “waves of democratization” in a 1993 book: a nineteenth-century wave, a second wave that took place between 1945 and the 1960s and 1970s, and a third wave that began in the mid-1970s and continued through the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> Some observers cite events in the Arab world as evidence that this third wave has continued, while others view it as the beginning of a fourth wave.

It is important to remember that in all these contexts “wave” serves as a metaphor, and like any metaphor it has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, there is no denying that later Arab uprisings borrowed techniques of mobilization and even symbols from earlier ones. Town squares that became the sites of protest throughout the Arab world were renamed “Tahrir” square after the main site of protest in Cairo, and the habit of garnering enthusiasm and relaying marching orders by renaming days of the week “Day of Rage” or “Day of Steadfastness” also came from the Egyptian model. Then there is the highly touted use of social networking sites for the purpose of mobilization.

On the other hand, the use of the wave metaphor obscures the fact that goals and styles of the uprisings have varied widely from country to country. In terms of the former, some protests have demanded reform, others the overthrow of the regime. In terms of the latter, there have been times when protests were predominantly peaceful and other times when they took a violent turn. More important, however, the wave metaphor lends an air of inevitability to what has been taking place in the Arab world. It was not inevitable. There are places in the Arab

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world, for example, that have not been affected. Most significantly, however, the air of inevitability connoted by the wave metaphor makes us lose sight of the tens of thousands of individual decisions made by people who joined the uprisings, and it takes away from the heroism of those who got up in the morning and decided, “Today I am going to face the full power of the state.”

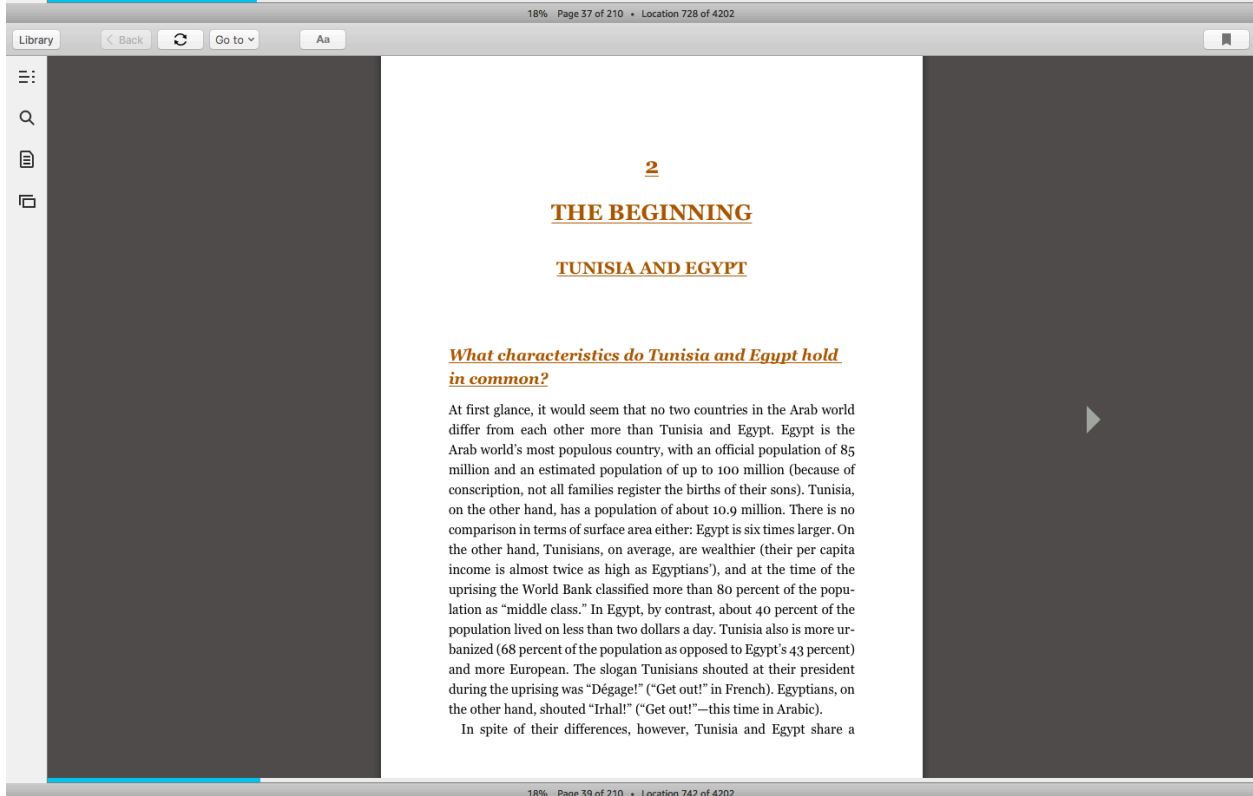
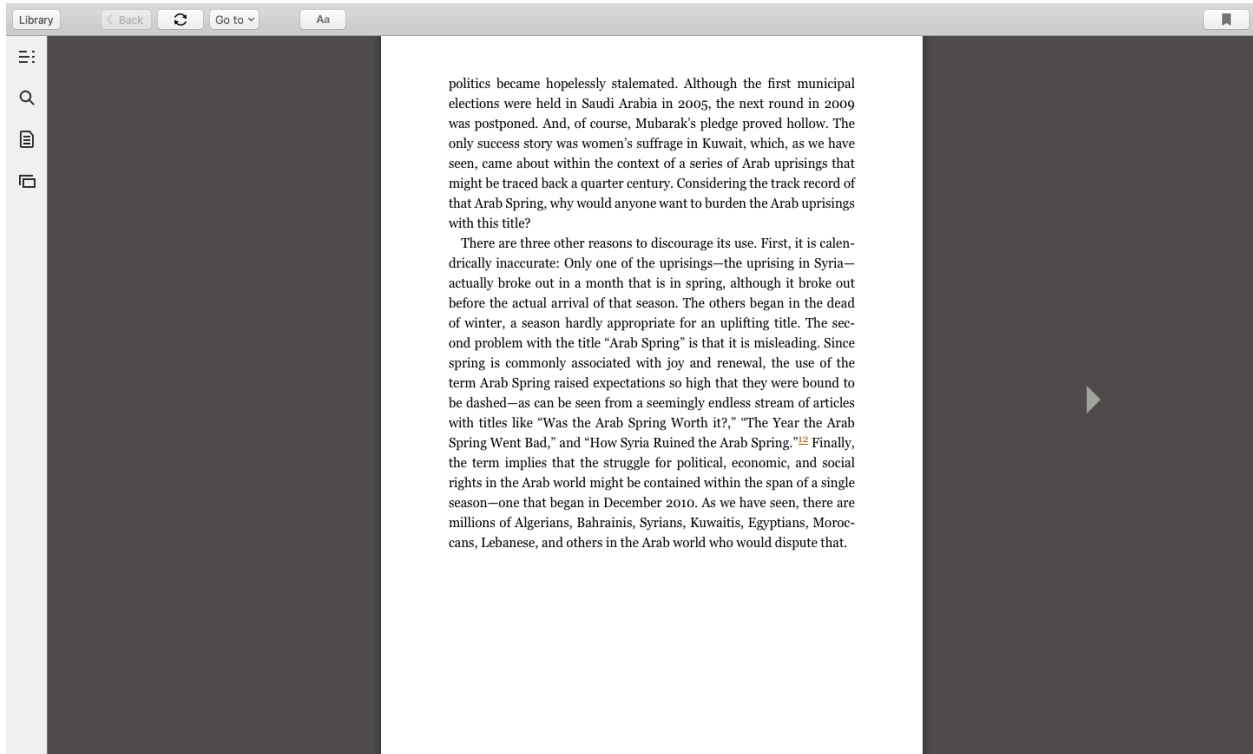
### *Where did the phrase “Arab Spring” come from, and how appropriate is it to describe events in the Arab world?*

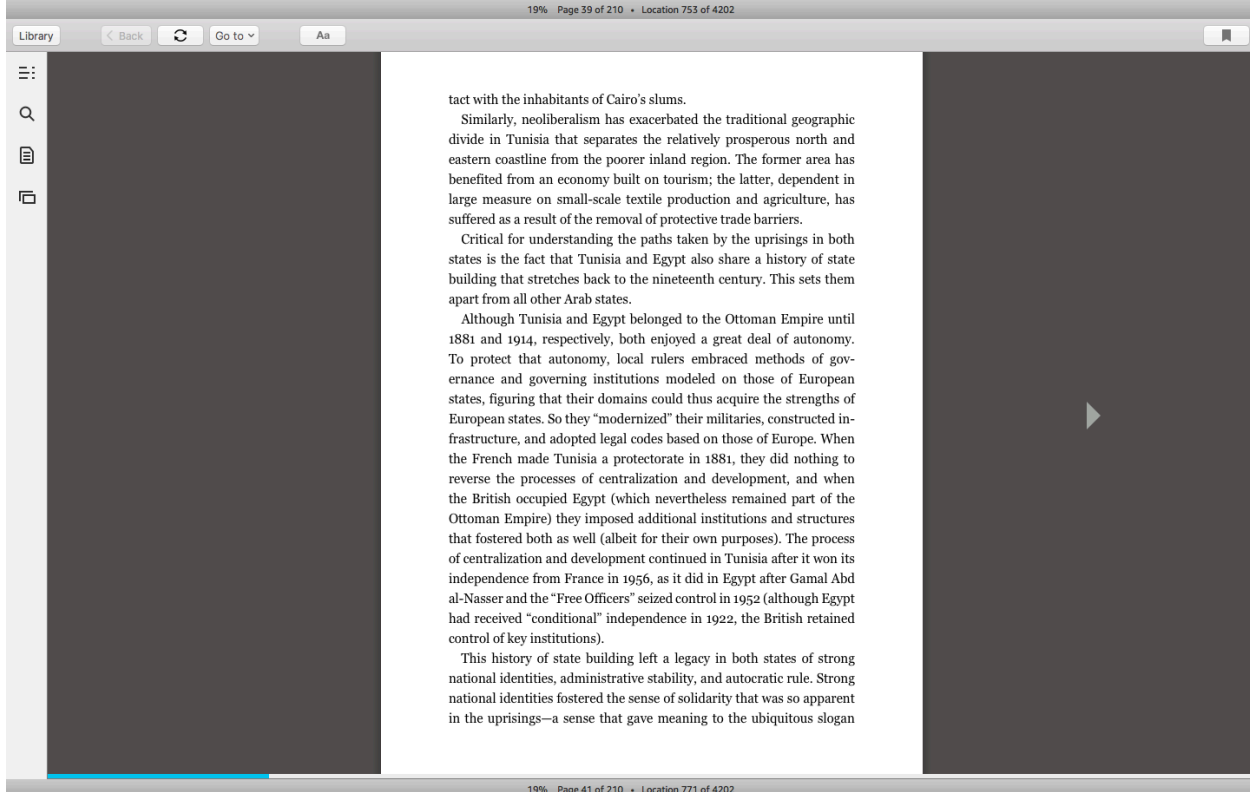
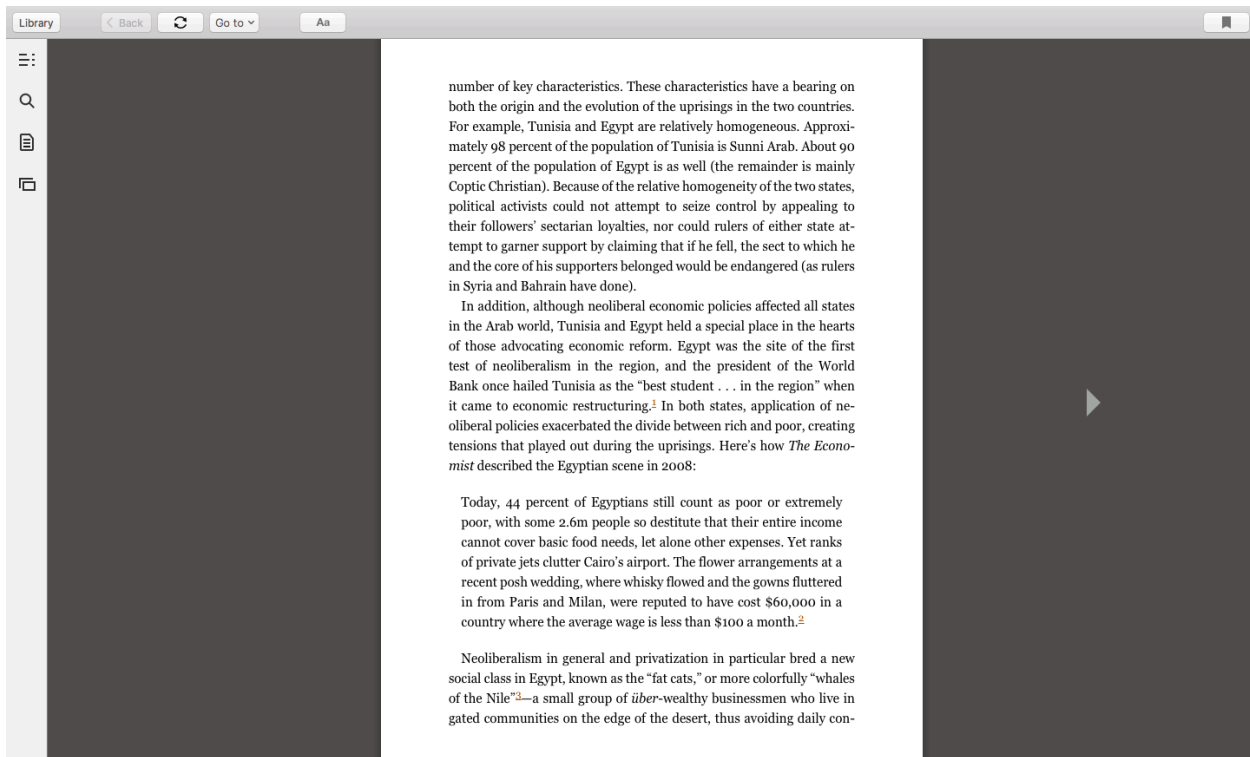
Springtime has always been associated with renewal, so perhaps it was inevitable that the Arab uprisings would earn the title “Arab Spring.” This is not the first time commentators have invoked the term *spring* to describe political events. The raft of revolutions that advocated liberalism and nationalism in Europe in 1848 earned the title “Springtime of Nations,” and the brief period in 1968 when Czechoslovakia flirted with liberal reform before Soviet tanks crushed Czech aspirations will forever be the “Prague Spring.”

Nor is this the first time commentators have invoked the phrase “Arab Spring.” Conservative commentators used the phrase in 2005 to refer to events in the Arab world that occurred in the wake of (and, according to some, as a result of) the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the announcement of President George W. Bush’s “freedom agenda.” Included among those events were the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s government and the first real elections in Iraq’s recent history and the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon. In addition, Saudi Arabia held municipal elections, women in Kuwait marched for the right to vote, and Hosni Mubarak pledged that there would be free presidential elections in Egypt.

Unfortunately, the fulfillment of the promise of that Arab Spring proved elusive. In 2006, sectarian violence raged in Iraq, and Lebanese

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that began “the people want . . .” And unlike in Libya and Syria, for example, no one predicted that the uprisings might lead to the fragmentation of either state. Strong institutions, such as the army, did not splinter, while others, such as the judiciary and the security apparatus remained in place even after rulers left the scene. The endurance of this “deep state” ensured administrative continuity, but it also provided a home base for “regime remnants” opposed to the goals of the uprisings long after autocrats had left the scene.

***How entrenched were the autocracies ruling Tunisia and Egypt?***

Strongmen ruling for long stretches of time have controlled Tunisia and Egypt for well over half a century. At the time of the uprising, Tunisians had known only two presidents since independence: Habib Bourguiba, who ruled for thirty years (1957–1987), and Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who ruled for twenty-four (1987–2011). Since the 1952 Free Officers’ coup in Egypt, from which Mubarak’s regime directly descended, Egyptians had known only three presidents: Gamal Abd al-Nasser (1952–1970), Anwar al-Sadat (1970–1981), and Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011).

Bourguiba was the leader of the Tunisian independence movement. A year after Tunisia won its independence from France, he deposed its monarch and proclaimed Tunisia a republic. He won election as the first president of Tunisia in 1959, and then three times after that until he decided to do away with the façade of elections entirely. Thus, in 1974, he had the National Assembly amend the constitution to make him president for life. Unfortunately, that life lasted longer than Bourguiba’s mental faculties. In 1987, Prime Minister Ben Ali, who had risen through the ranks of the military before starting his political career, had doctors proclaim Bourguiba mentally incompetent, and in accordance with the constitution he became president.

In some of his first acts, Ben Ali raised hopes of Tunisians by abol-

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ishing the presidency-for-life and having the constitution amended to limit to three the number of terms a president could serve in office. Another amendment mandated the president to be under seventy-five when he takes office. In 2002, he dashed those hopes by backing a phony referendum in which Tunisians repealed the amendments, making him eligible for more terms. Overall, he “won” reelection five times, garnering anywhere between 89 and 98 percent of the vote each time.

Like Bourguiba, Nasser abolished a monarchy to become Egypt’s first president. The end of the monarchy brought Egypt’s so-called liberal age to a close. During that era (1922–1952), Egypt had not only a king but a parliament in which seats were contested, political parties that competed with each other, and a press that was relatively free. It was hardly a golden age, unless one associates a golden age with plutocracy. Nevertheless, it was less despotic than what would succeed it and the population could enjoy a modicum of political freedom. Nasser did away with the trappings that characterized the liberal age, establishing one-man, one-party rule.

After Nasser’s death, Sadat, the hand-picked vice president, became president. It is possible to glean Sadat’s concept of democracy from a confrontation he once had with a foreign reporter. When the reporter asked him a question he did not like, Sadat snapped, “In other times I would have shot you, but it is democracy I am suffering from.” When an Islamist assassinated Sadat in 1981, his vice president, Mubarak, assumed the presidency. Like Nasser and Sadat, Mubarak came up through the military (in this case, the air force). He “won” the presidency three times. It was not all that difficult: the Egyptian constitution raised so many obstacles for candidates that he had few rivals. Before the uprising, Mubarak did promise that the 2011 elections would, however, be “freer” than those that had preceded it.

***How did the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt***

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### *attempt to control their populations?*

In both Tunisia and Egypt, the state put in place an all-pervasive security apparatus to monitor, frighten, and repress the population. The term *security apparatus* covers a variety of formal and informal groups with overlapping and often ill-defined jurisdictions. For example, because Ben Ali was not satisfied with entrusting the entirety of his security needs to the minister of the interior and the military, he used his own "sovereignty fund" to set up a parallel security force over which he had direct control. Mubarak was even more ambitious when it came to his security forces: an estimated two million Egyptians participated at any given time in Egypt's security apparatus. They ran the gamut from ministry officials to agents in the field to hired thugs to common snitches. Some were attached to the interior ministry. Others, such as those in the Central Security Services, acted as Mubarak's private army. Then there were those in the Intelligence Services, a branch of the military. Each branch operated independently.

During the 1980s, government officials, members of the ruling party, and private businessmen began to outsource their security needs to local hoodlums, known among Egyptians as *baltagiya*. The term was originally a Turkish word meaning "hatchet man." The *baltagiya* were drug runners, common criminals, gang members, former prisoners, or unemployed or underemployed slum dwellers whom the government, politicians, and businessmen hired to terrorize neighborhoods and political opponents, break up demonstrations, bust strikes, and in general contribute to creating a menacing atmosphere to cow the population.

### *How widespread was corruption in Tunisia and Egypt?*

In both Tunisia and Egypt, tales of corruption took on almost mythic proportions. The inhabitants of both are used to dealing with policemen

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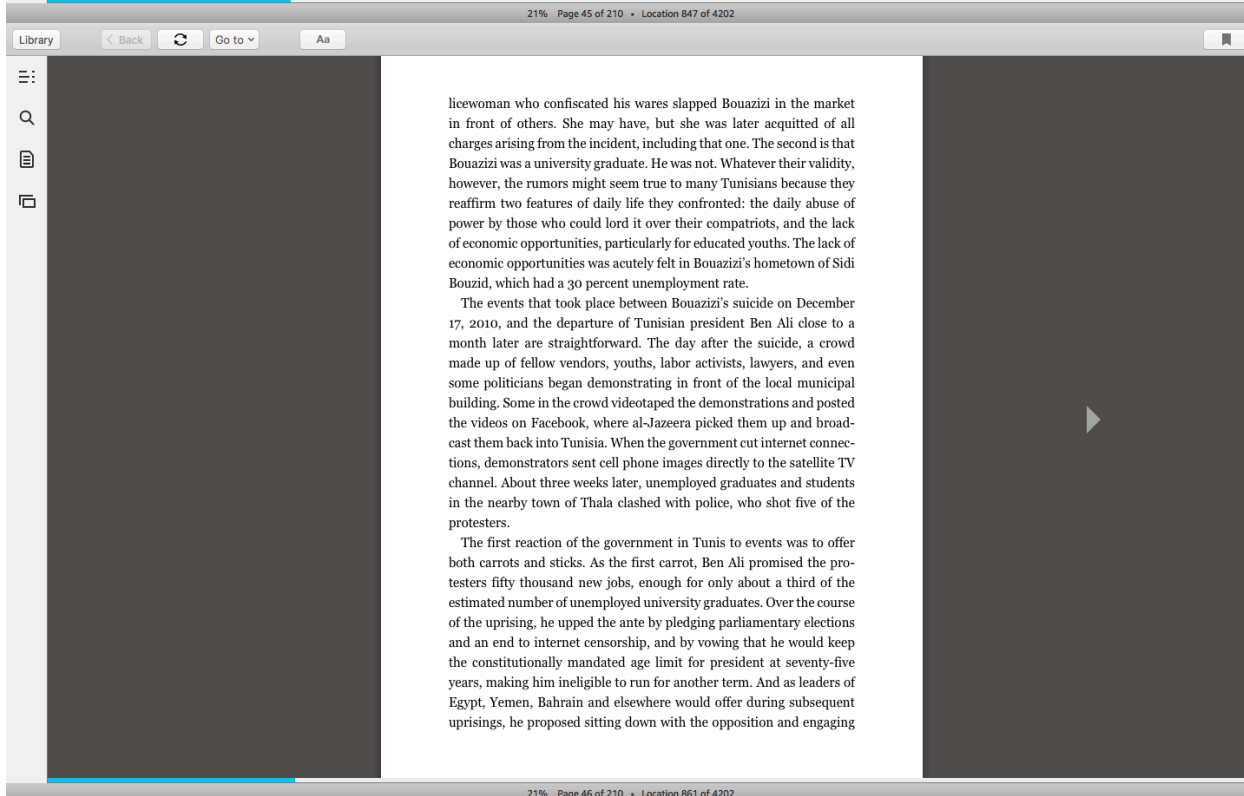
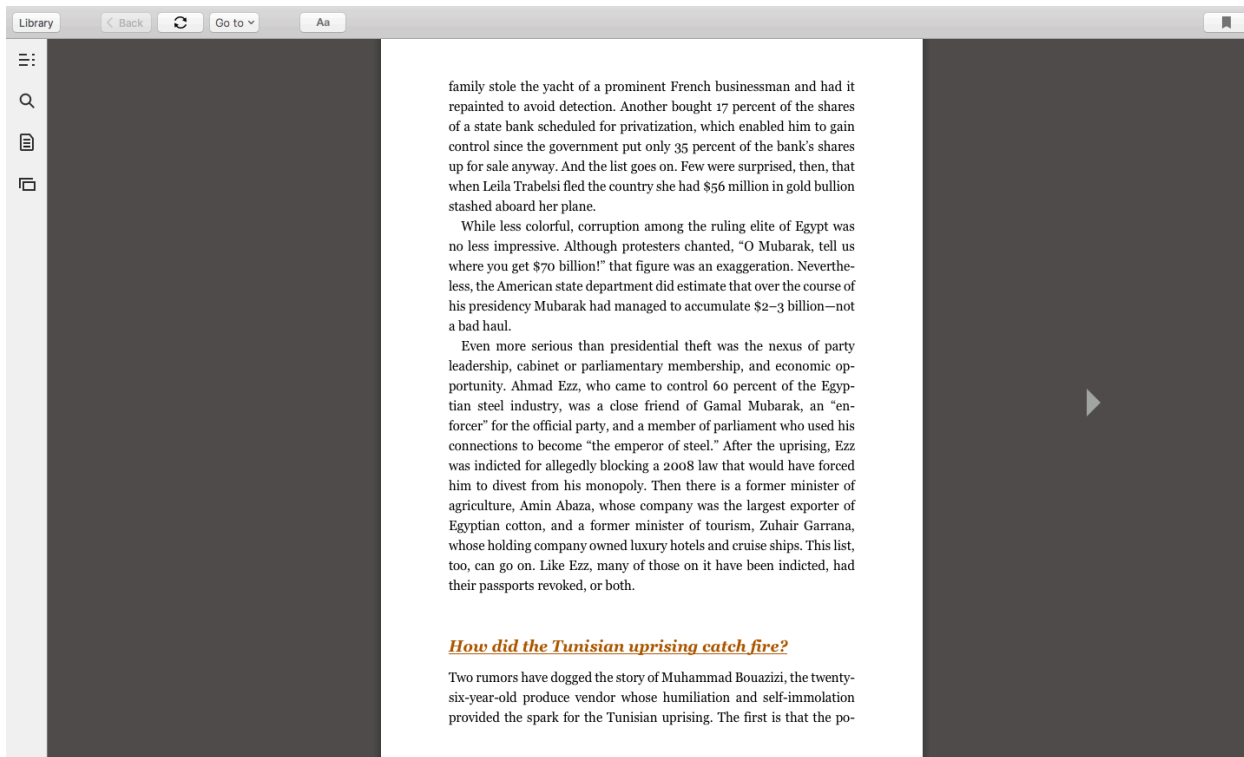
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and civil servants with their hands out (because salaries are low, bribery is effectively built into the economic system). But during the uprisings, protesters vented their rage on corruption at the top. Take, for example, the system of crony capitalism that neoliberal reform engendered. In both Tunisia and Egypt, privatization of government-owned assets fed the corruption; those who had connections with, for example, the ruling party, or more important the president's family, were most successful in acquiring public enterprises, usually at bargain-basement rates. Thus the story of privatization in Tunisia contains a hefty subplot involving the family of Ben Ali's wife, Leila Trabelsi, while that of privatization in Egypt revolves around Gamal Mubarak, Hosni Mubarak's son.

There was, however, more to corruption than that bred by privatization, and there was a reason one of the most popular chants among protesters in Tunisia was "No, no to the Trabelsis who looted the budget" (it sounds better in Arabic). Thanks to WikiLeaks, which obtained and posted on the web cables sent by the American ambassador to Tunisia, details of the doings of the former hairdresser-turned-first-lady, whom the press called "the Marie Antoinette of Tunisia," or the "Imelda Marcos of Tunisia" (after another profligate spender), are widely known. So are the doings of her kin, who are called "the Family," with all its mafia connotations, in the cables. "Seemingly half of the Tunisian business community can claim a Ben Ali connection through marriage, and many of these relations are reported to have made the most of their lineage," one cable, titled "Corruption in Tunisia: What's Yours Is Mine," reported.<sup>4</sup>

That cable and others describe boundless kleptomania and conspicuous consumption: the Trabelsi clan, for example, owned the only private radio station in the country, the largest airline, several hotel companies, extensive real estate holdings, car assembly plants, a for-profit school, etc., all of which they obtained through insider dealings, bribery, expropriation, and outright theft. Two members of the

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in a “national dialogue” about the country’s future. But, warning that protests were scaring off foreign investment and tourism, he ordered all schools and universities closed to prevent students from massing—in the process ensuring that a steady supply of students with time on their hands would feed the protests. He then dispatched security forces and the army to put down the uprising. In the first encounter with protesters, the army unit he dispatched refused to open fire.

A few days after the carnage at Thala, the uprising, which had previously been concerned primarily with economic demands, took a decidedly political turn. In the town of Kasserine in western Tunisia, where twenty-one died at the hands of government snipers, infuriated protesters turned their sights on those responsible, demanding the immediate departure of President Ben Ali. The stakes had risen dramatically and quickly. Fueled by new media (such as text messaging), old media (such as al-Jazeera), and word of mouth, the uprising spread throughout the country. When it reached Tunis on January 13, the chief of staff of the Tunisian armed forces told the army to stand down. Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia the next day (the role played by the army in his flight is still not clear). This was the first time in the modern history of the Arab world a popular uprising forced the ouster of a ruler.

***Why didn’t the Tunisian uprising take place earlier?***

On March 3, 2010, a street vendor named Abdeslem Trimech set himself on fire in front of the office of the general secretary of Monastir, a town on the Tunisian coast. Earlier in the day, Trimech had gone to the municipal building to protest the revocation of his vending license. After being rebuffed, he left, then returned with a flammable liquid which he poured over himself. Then he lit his lighter. Trimech was thirty or thirty-one years old (like many of the details of this story, his age is disputed), the father of two children. He lingered for a week while

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angry residents of Monastir clashed with the police. Tens of thousands attended his funeral (one report puts the number at 50,000 in a town of 80,000), which turned into an angry anti-government demonstration. The proceedings were videotaped and posted on social media outlets. In all, Trimech’s story closely resembles that of Bouazizi’s, with one exception: The day after the funeral, life in the town returned to normal and few outside Monastir cared much if anything about the incident.

It was reported that between Trimech’s suicide and Bouazizi’s, seven Tunisians had committed suicide by burning themselves to death. One of them, Chams Eddine Heni, a thirty-one-year-old from Metlaoui in west/central Tunisia, did so less than a month before Bouazizi. He had quarreled with his father over money he needed in order to obtain travel documents to Italy so he might escape the grinding poverty of his hometown. So the question remains: Why the differing reactions to events that were fundamentally similar?

Some observers have cited the fact that Sidi Bouzid is significantly poorer than Monastir—but then again so is Metlaoui. Others claim that local leaders, like trade union representatives and leaders of professional associations, did not link Trimech’s death to broader political and economic issues—although the slogans shouted by the crowds after his act and at his funeral, along with the attacks on symbols of authority, seem to challenge the idea that there was any need for them to have done so. Still others argue that there was one significant difference between Bouazizi’s suicide and the others: His was not merely recorded on social media, but al-Jazeera (“old media”) picked up those videos and rebroadcast them endlessly throughout Tunisia and the Arabic-speaking world. This increased the awareness—if not the significance—of that event.

While appealing in its simplicity this explanation, too, fails to convince. By tying the Tunisian uprising to television coverage, this explanation resembles those theories that would tie the French Revolution to a rise in bread prices. It’s what historians call “mechanistic” because,

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between stimulus and response, it leaves no space for human choice. Second, as we shall see below, placing some technology at the center of our story denigrates the role of those who chose to place Bouazizi's tragic death in a political framework and to do something about it.

Finally, there is also a problem in framing the question in terms of why Trimech's and Heni's deaths did not result in uprisings while Bouazizi's death did. Uprisings such as the one Tunisia experienced in 2010 are exceptional, not commonplace, occurrences in world history. Their non-occurrence needs no explanation. The real mystery is why Tunisians and the rest of the Arab world reacted to the death of Bouazizi as they did.

***Was the uprising in Egypt like that of Tunisia?***

The Tunisian uprising left an immediate and powerful impression on many people in Egypt. More than a dozen Egyptians, for example, copied Muhammad Bouazizi's suicide-by-fire. More productively, the Tunisian uprising demonstrated to the disaffected in Egypt and elsewhere that broad-based movements, such as the one that brought down the Tunisian government, were viable.

Those who planned the January 25, 2011, protests in Cairo and other Egyptian cities, for example—the opening salvo of the Egyptian uprising—have attributed their tactics, principal slogan (“The regime must go”), and ultimate goal (realization of that slogan) to their counterparts in Tunisia. In fact, a number of those who organized the initial demonstrations in Egypt knew their counterparts in Tunisia and were similarly young and technology-savvy. Hence, the widespread use of social media in both uprisings.

But even when events spun out of their control, there were important aspects of the Egyptian uprising that closely resembled those of the Tunisian one. Among them was the way in which the uprising fed off spontaneity, its leaderlessness, its rapid spread, and its nonreligious

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and largely nonviolent orientation. Like protesters in Tunisia, those in Egypt linked demands for political rights with economic justice and thus linked youths and labor activists in a common cause. And as in the case of the Tunisian uprising, the military in Egypt played a pivotal role, ensuring the speedy departure of the ruler.

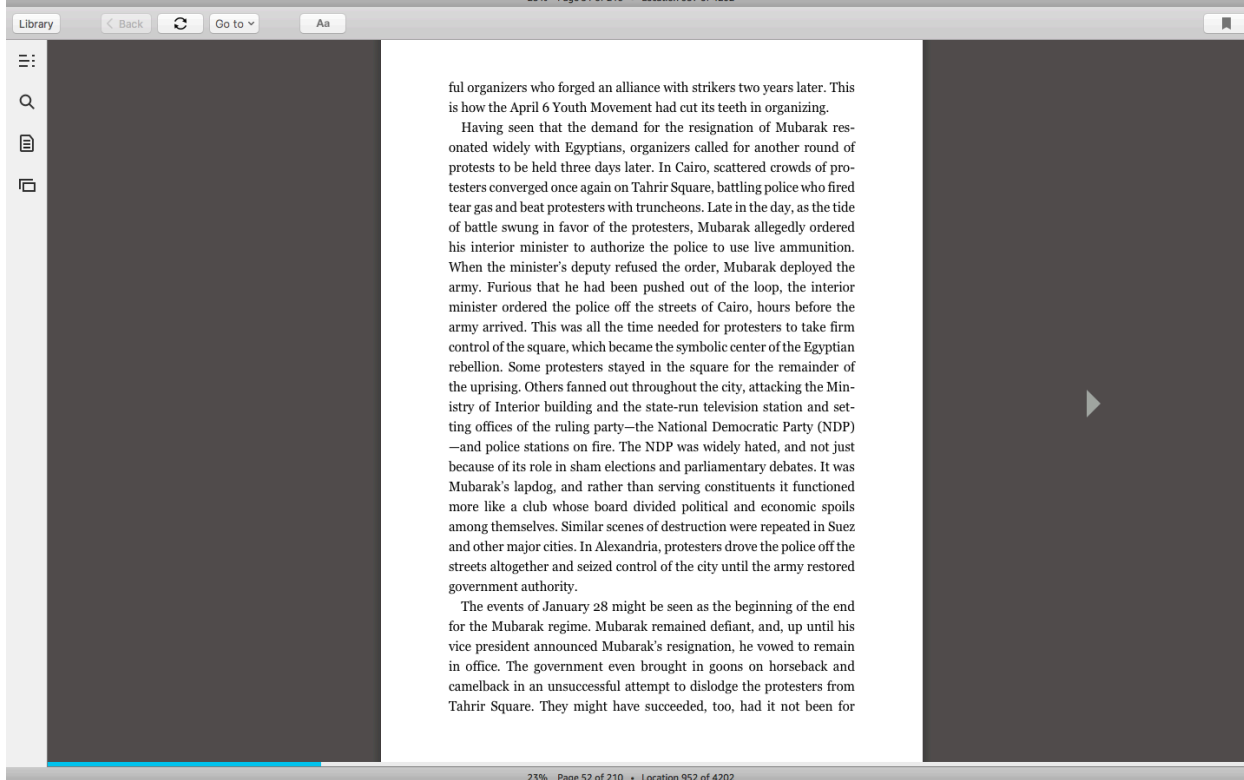
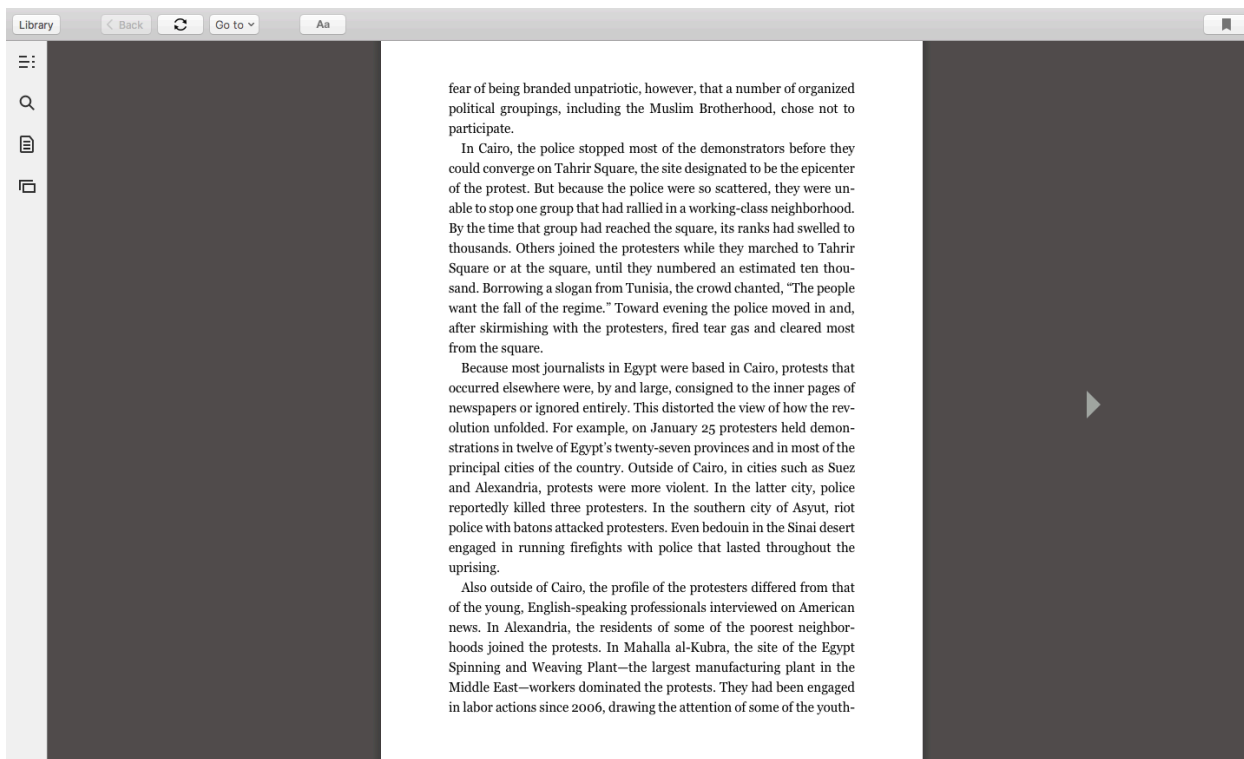
***How did the initial phase of the Egyptian uprising play itself out?***

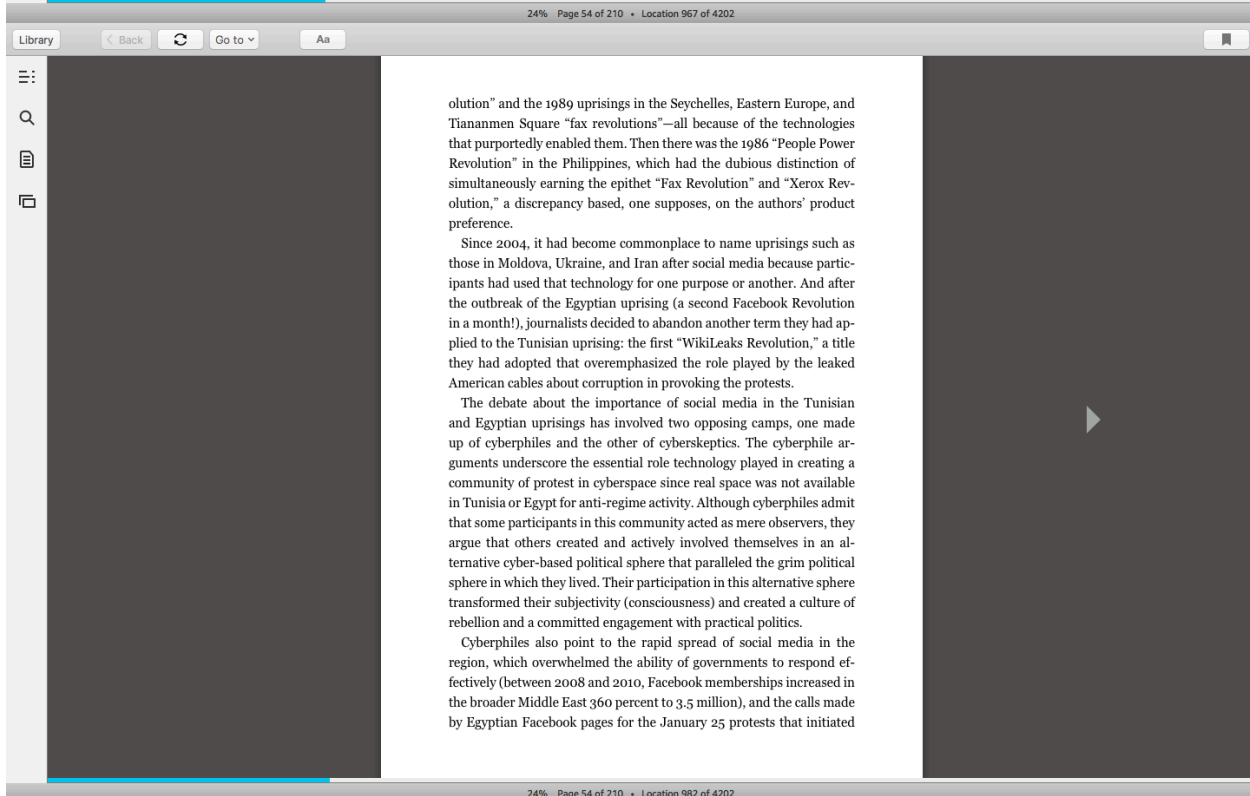
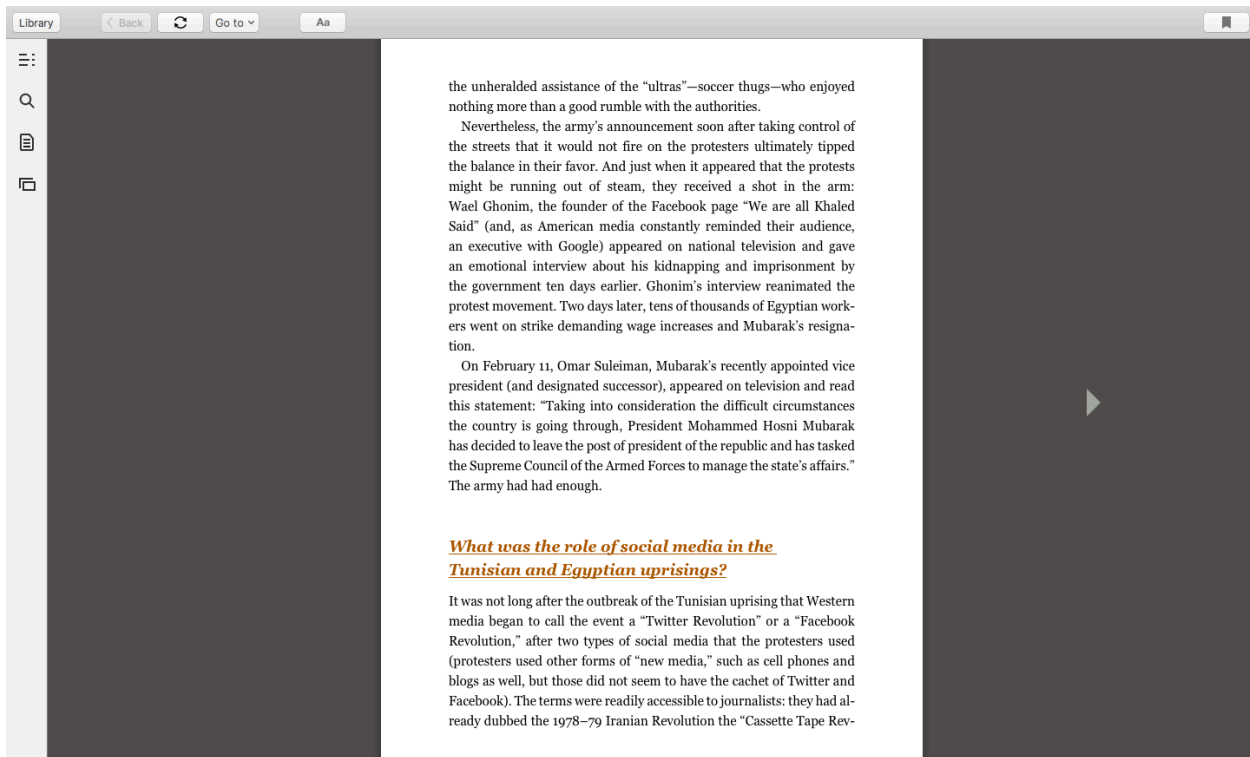
There were several groups calling for protests on January 25. Perhaps most famous was a group of young activists known as the “April 6 Youth Movement” who had worked together in oppositional politics for three years. On the eve of the protests, one of the group's founders, Asmaa Mahfouz, posted a video in which she taunted, “I, a girl, am going down to Tahrir Square and I will stand alone . . . and I'll hold up a banner, perhaps [other] people will show some honor.” Then there were the administrators of the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Said.” Said (pronounced Sa-*eed*) was a twenty-eight-year-old owner of a small import-export business in Alexandria who, it is believed, videotaped two policemen splitting up cash and drugs they had confiscated in a drug deal. Said subsequently posted the video. For his audacity, the policemen beat him to death. Somehow, his supporters obtained and posted photos of his mangled, beaten face. By the time of the uprising, the page had 473,000 visitors, many of whom learned of the protests from it.

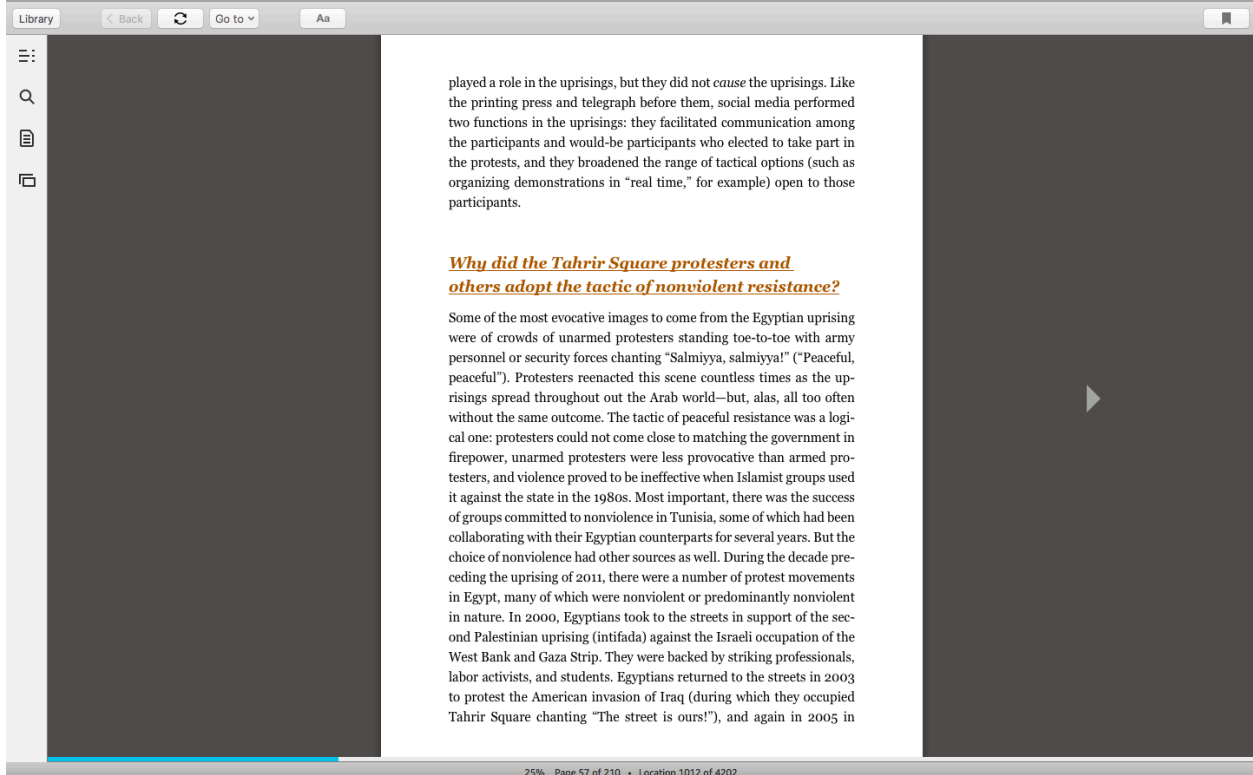
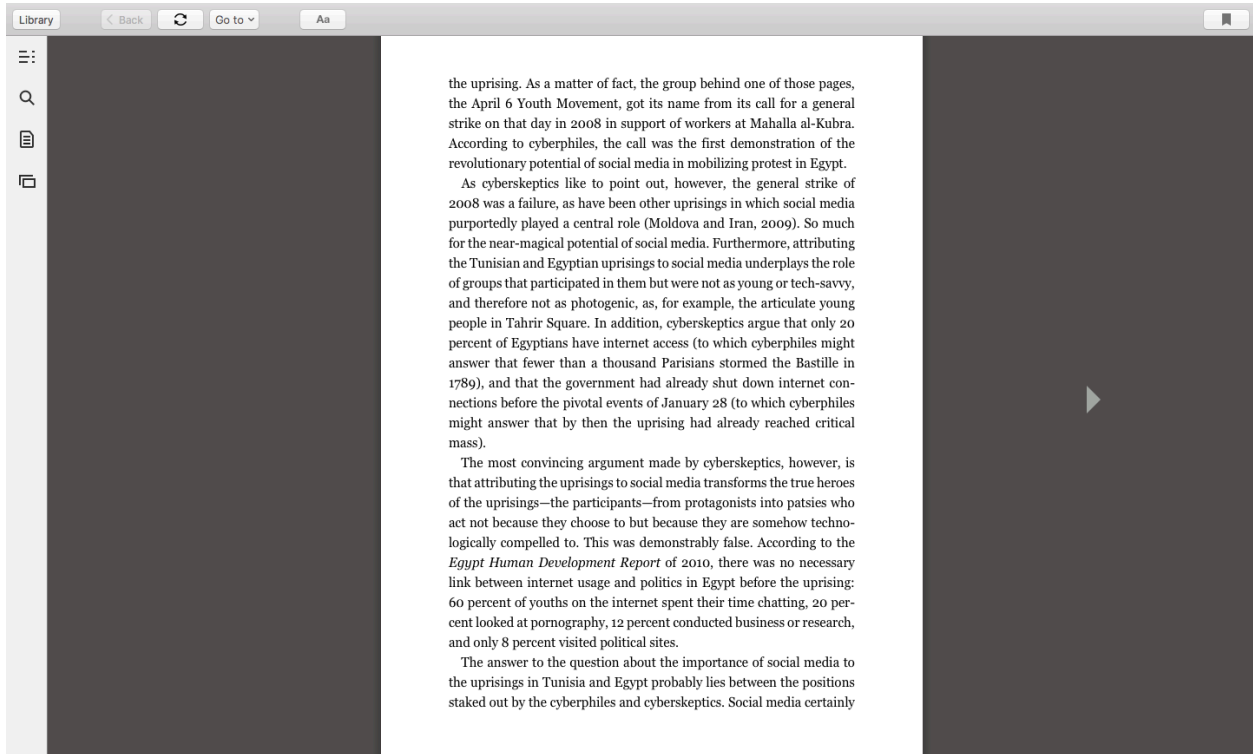
Often overlooked in accounts that glorified the role played by the first two groups were activists from the youth wings of the Muslim Brotherhood and various political parties, along with labor organizers. Their participation ensured the protests would have the backing of a broad coalition.

Organizers chose January 25 because it coincided with National Police Day—a newly proclaimed national holiday that celebrated its widely despised namesake. The irony was not lost on the organizers. It was for

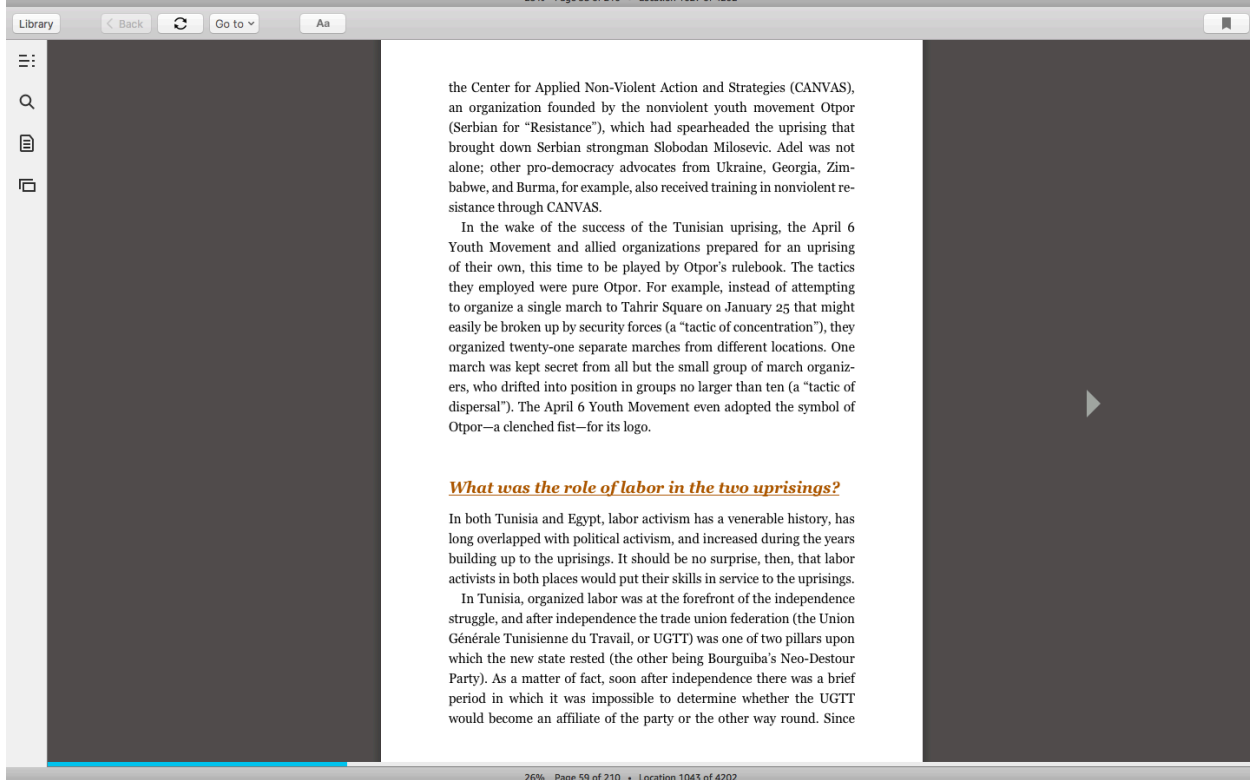
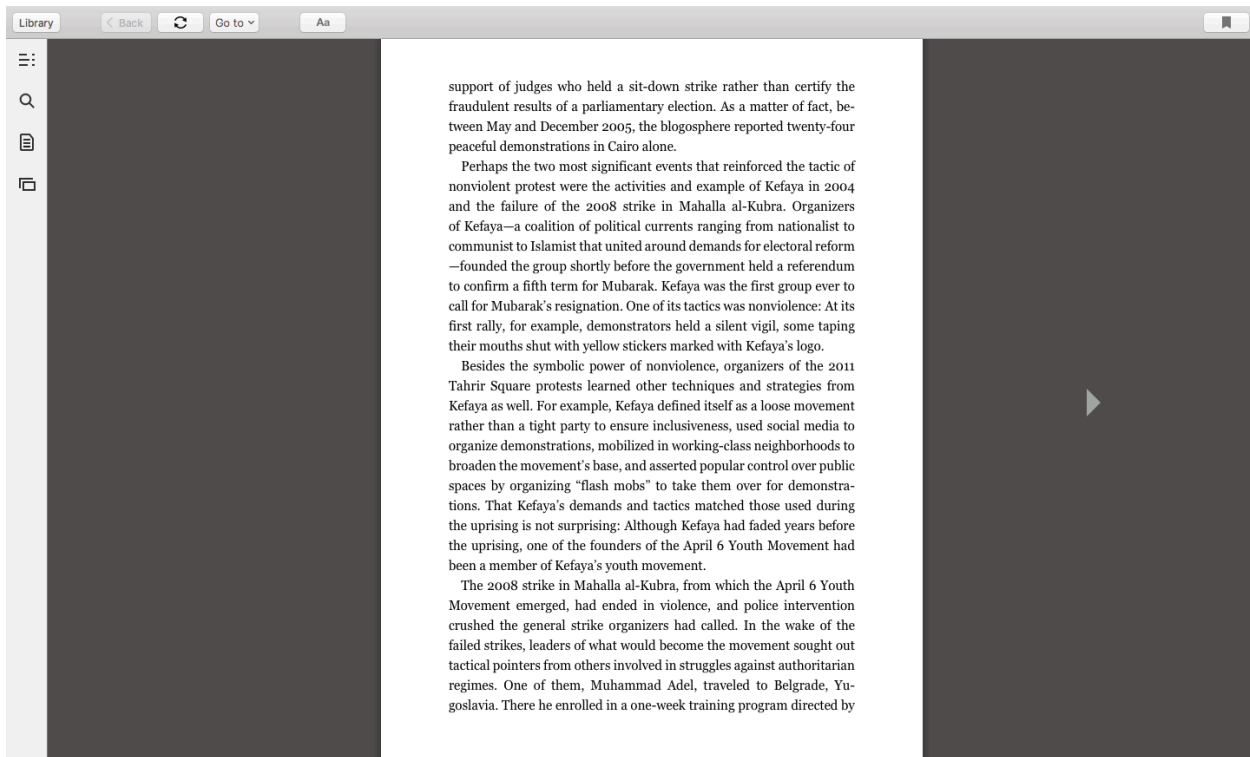
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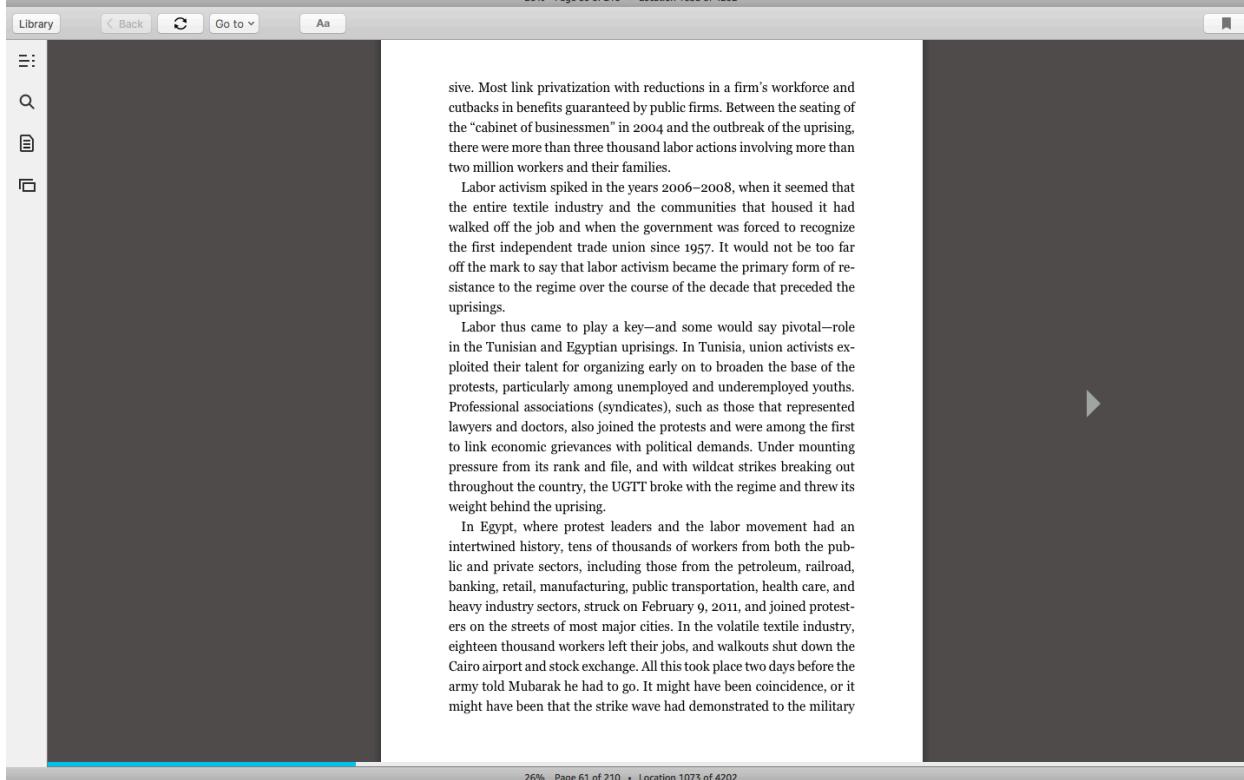
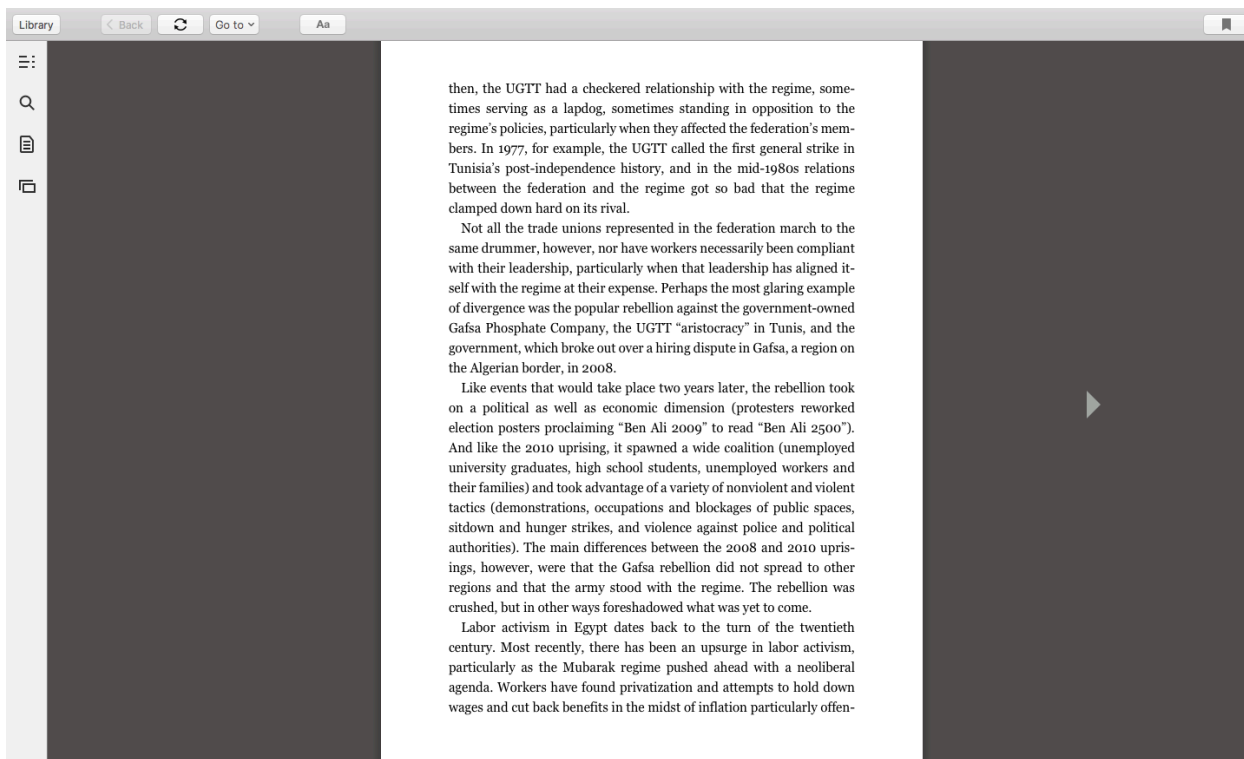


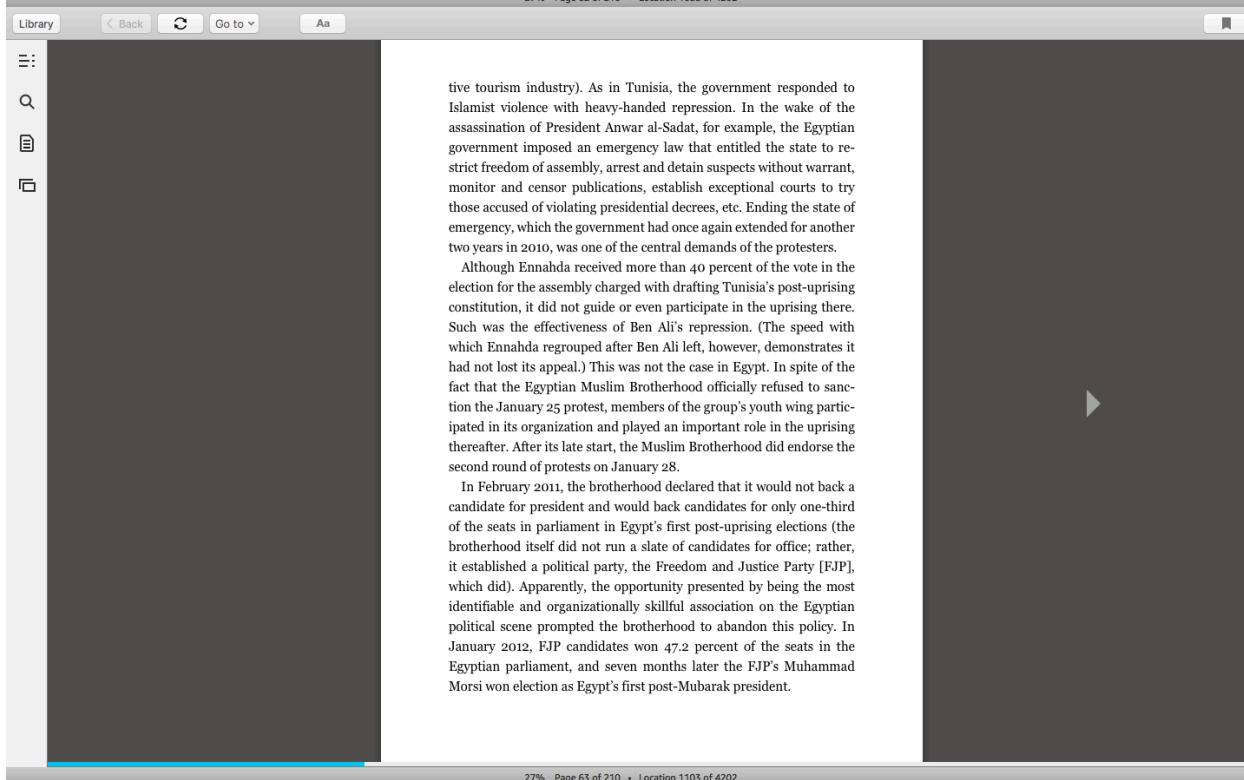
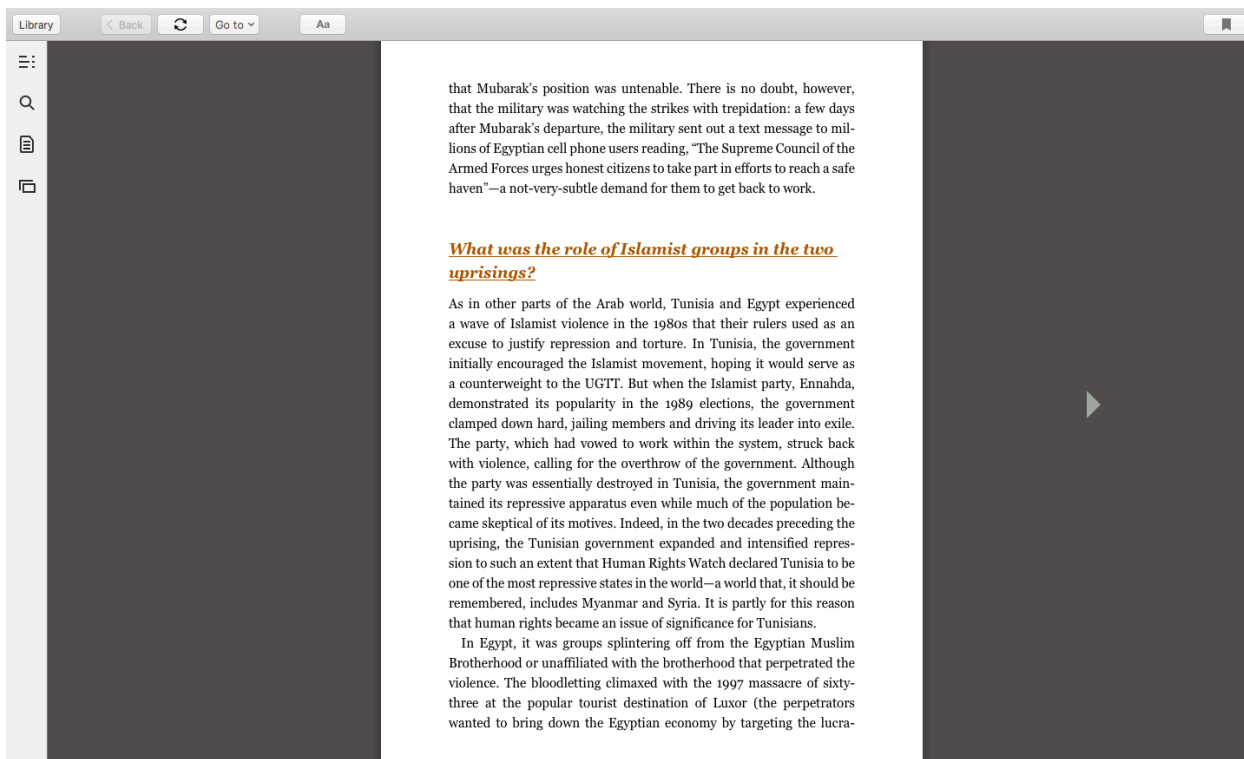












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### ***What was the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood?***

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by a charismatic school teacher, Hassan al-Banna, to promote personal piety, charitable acts, and a Muslim revival to counter what many Egyptians believed to be a Western cultural onslaught. It was officially disbanded by a military-backed government that seized power in 2013 after it had reached the pinnacle of power in Egypt and performed in a manner that was widely derided by Egyptians. While the military-backed government condemned the brotherhood as a terrorist organization, its last confirmed use of violence was in 1948, when its "secret apparatus" assassinated the Egyptian prime minister who had ordered the organization dissolved (Nasser accused the brotherhood of attempting to assassinate him in 1954, but this might have been a ploy to give him license to crush his rival).

Since that time, some within the brotherhood have periodically become radicalized (mainly in prison) and left the brotherhood to form their own organizations, while others acted as if they believed discretion to be the better part of valor. After years of repression, the "general guide" of the brotherhood renounced violence altogether in 1969 and 1972, and his successor renewed the pledge in 1987 in return for permission to form a party so that the brotherhood might legally participate in the political process, such as it was. That permission was not forthcoming, but the organization did support candidates for parliament. In 2005, brotherhood-affiliated candidates won 20 percent of parliamentary seats. The government's response was massive electoral fraud in the parliamentary elections of 2010, which fed opposition to the regime.

Political scientist Carrie Rosefsky Wickham identified three currents within the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the Mubarak and early post-Mubarak era.<sup>5</sup> The first consisted of those who foreswore

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political activity altogether in favor of preaching and pious activities. Their attitude seems to have been that there is no point to imposing Islamic law over a society that is unprepared for and undeserving of it. The second faction, probably the largest, combined conservative religious views with political participation. They wanted to reassert Islamic law and what they considered to be Islamic values in the public sphere.

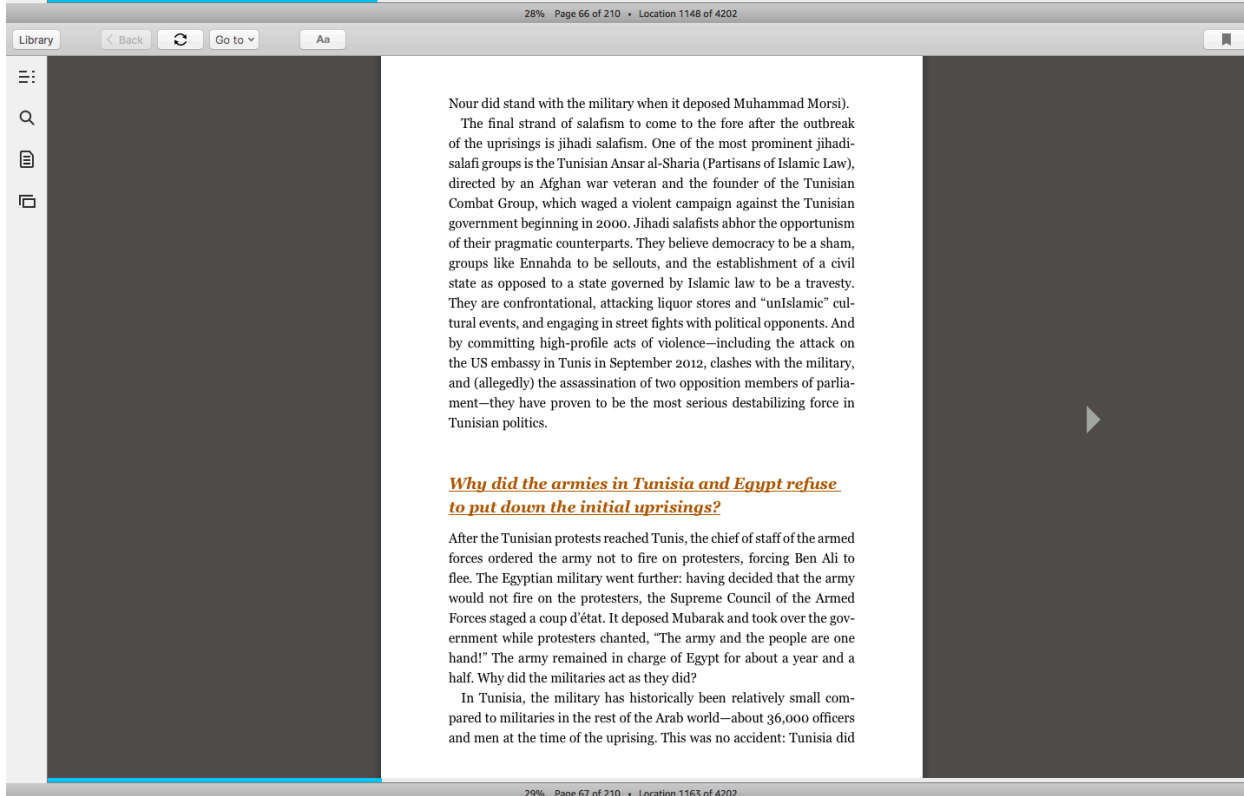
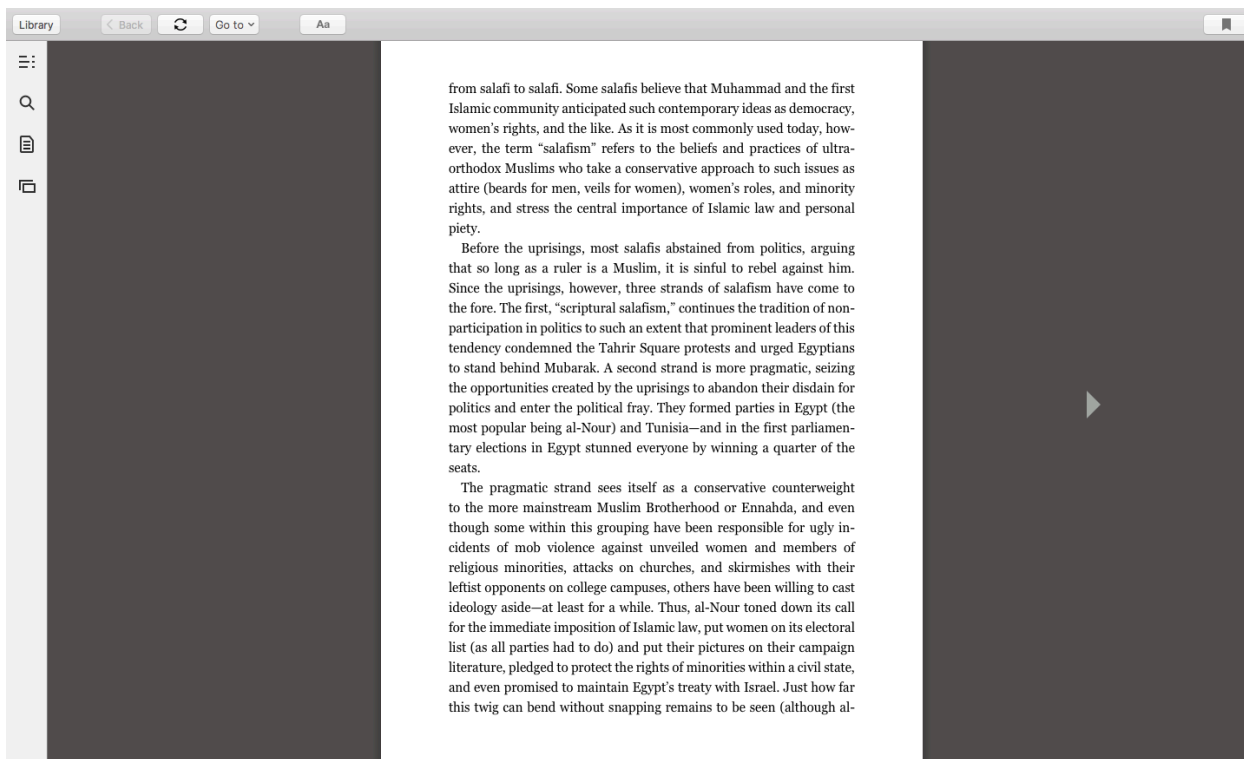
Finally, there were those who chose to participate in politics but whose Islam was more liberal. It was members of this wing of the brotherhood who called for reform of the brotherhood's authoritarian structure, worked side-by-side with secular colleagues since their Kefaya days, were adept at using social media, and were at the forefront of the uprising. While never more than a small fraction of the organization at the time of its disbandment, their participation in electoral activities on university campuses and in professional organizations (such as those that spoke for doctors, engineers, pharmacists, scientists, and lawyers) introduced them to the world of contested elections and representative politics and signaled the possibility of a secular liberal/liberal Islamist political bloc in the future.

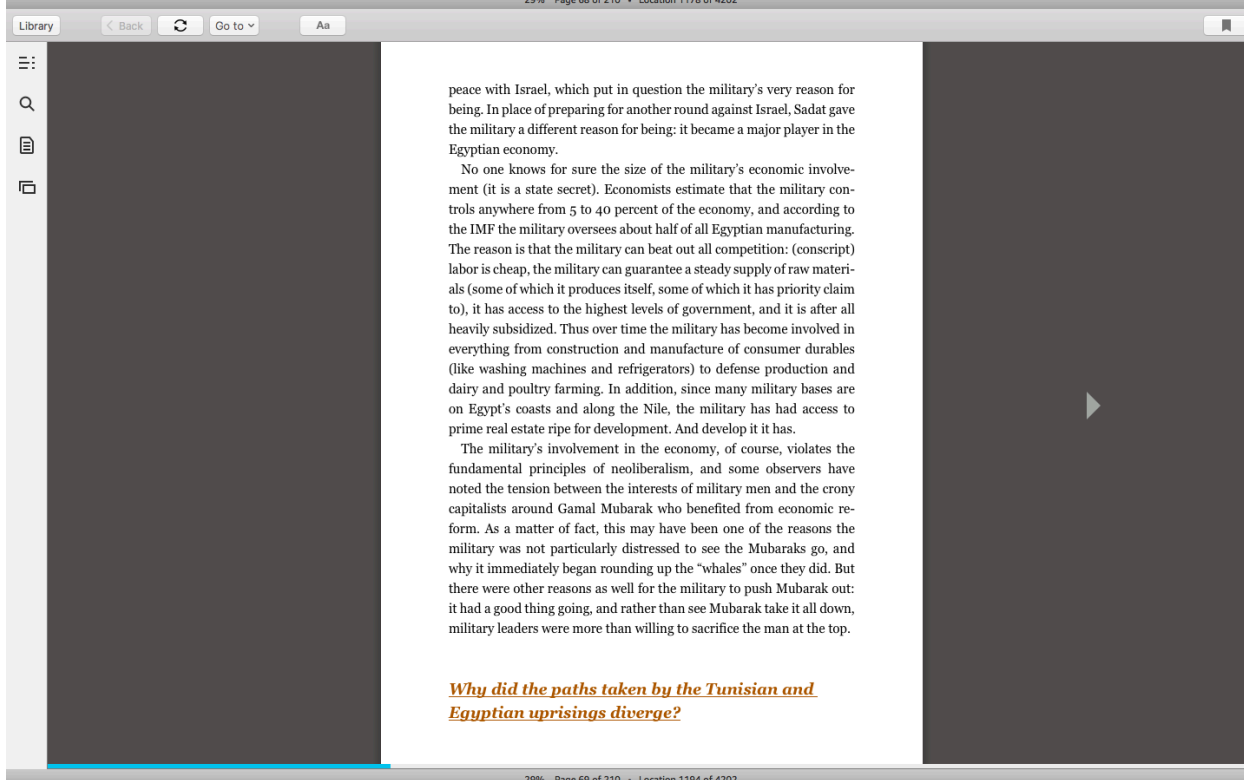
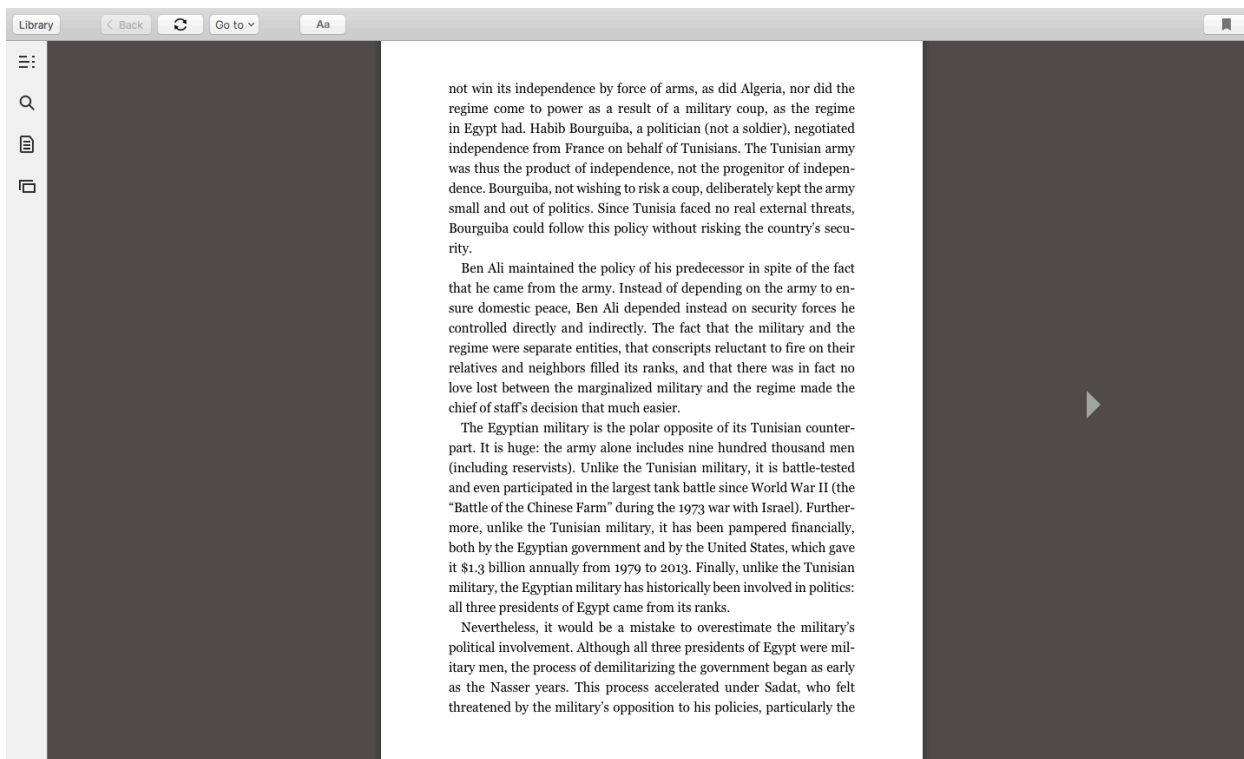
### ***What are salafis?***

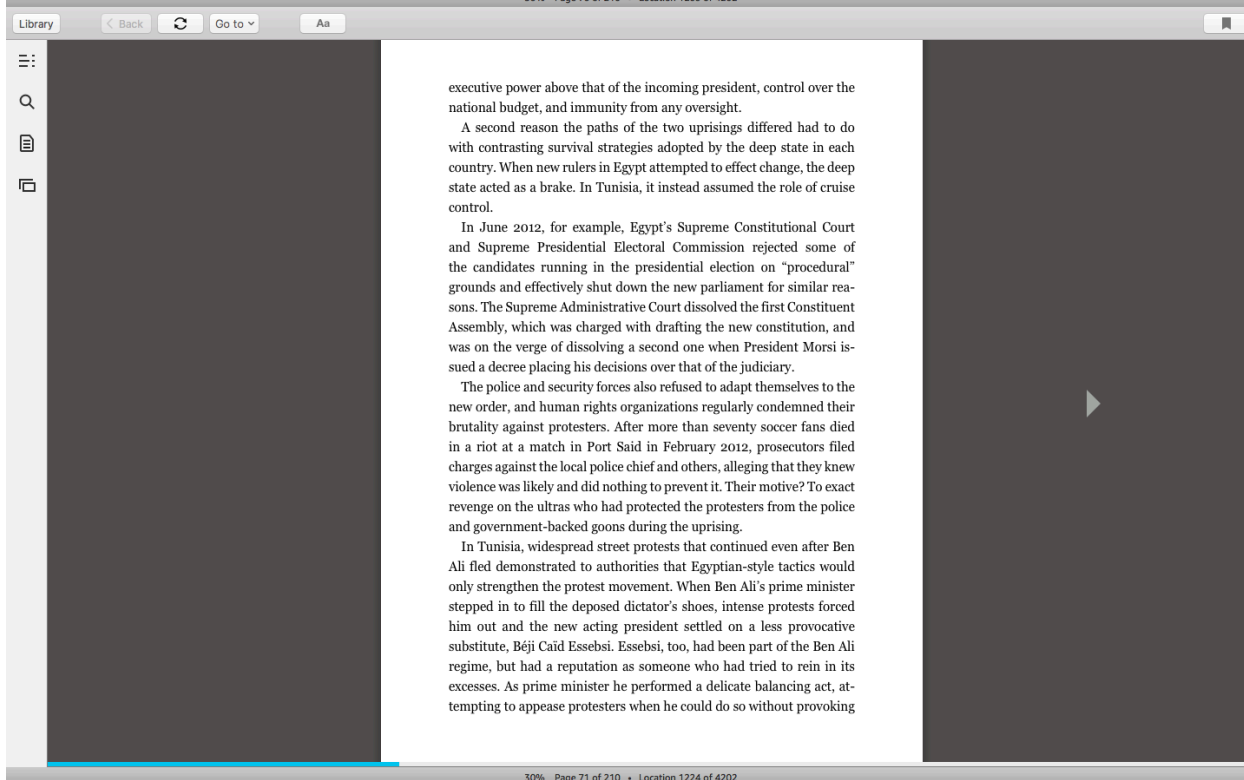
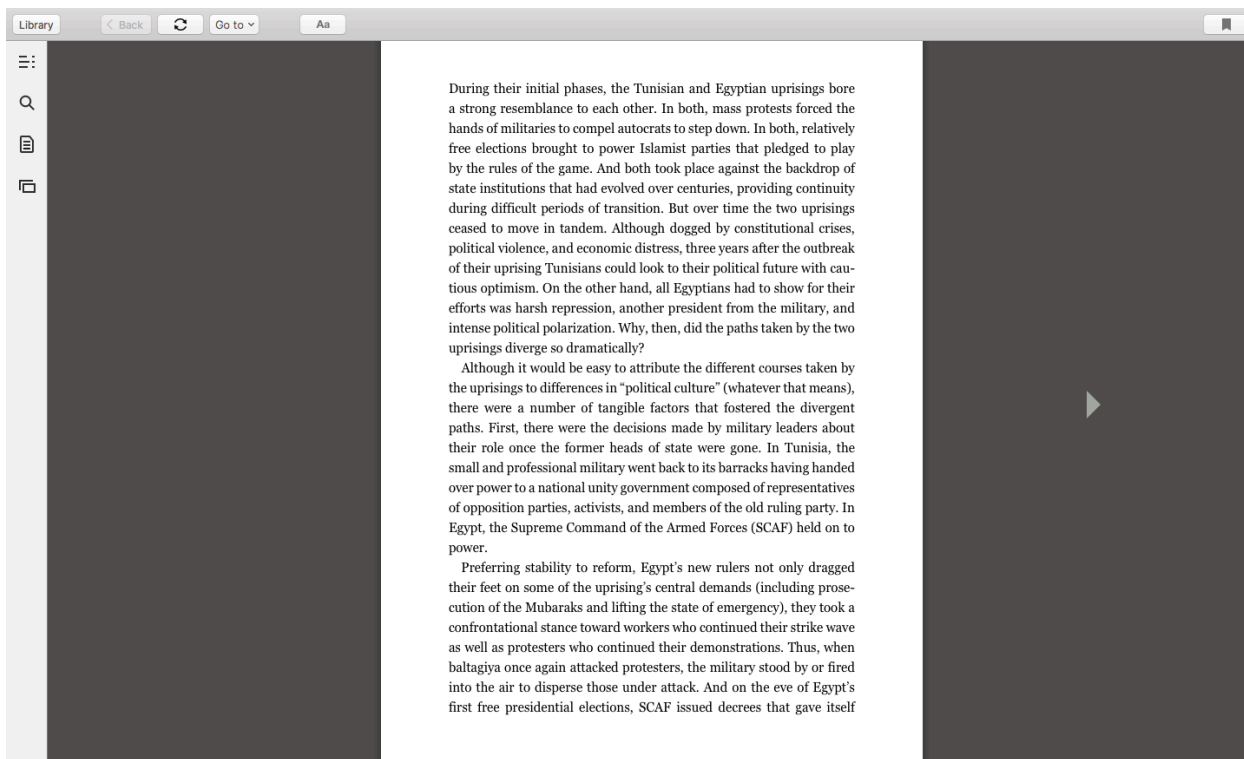
One of the big surprises to come out of the uprisings has been the rise to prominence of salafi groups throughout the region, particularly in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Salafism refers to a method some Muslims use for uncovering religious truth. The words "salafi" and "salafism" come from the Arabic phrase "*al-salaf al-salih*"—the pious ancestors—meaning the companions of the prophet who formed the original Islamic community in Medina under the guidance of Muhammad. Salafis look to that community as a model community. They also regard only two religious sources as valid—the Qur'an and *hadith* (reports of the sayings and activities of the prophet and his companions).

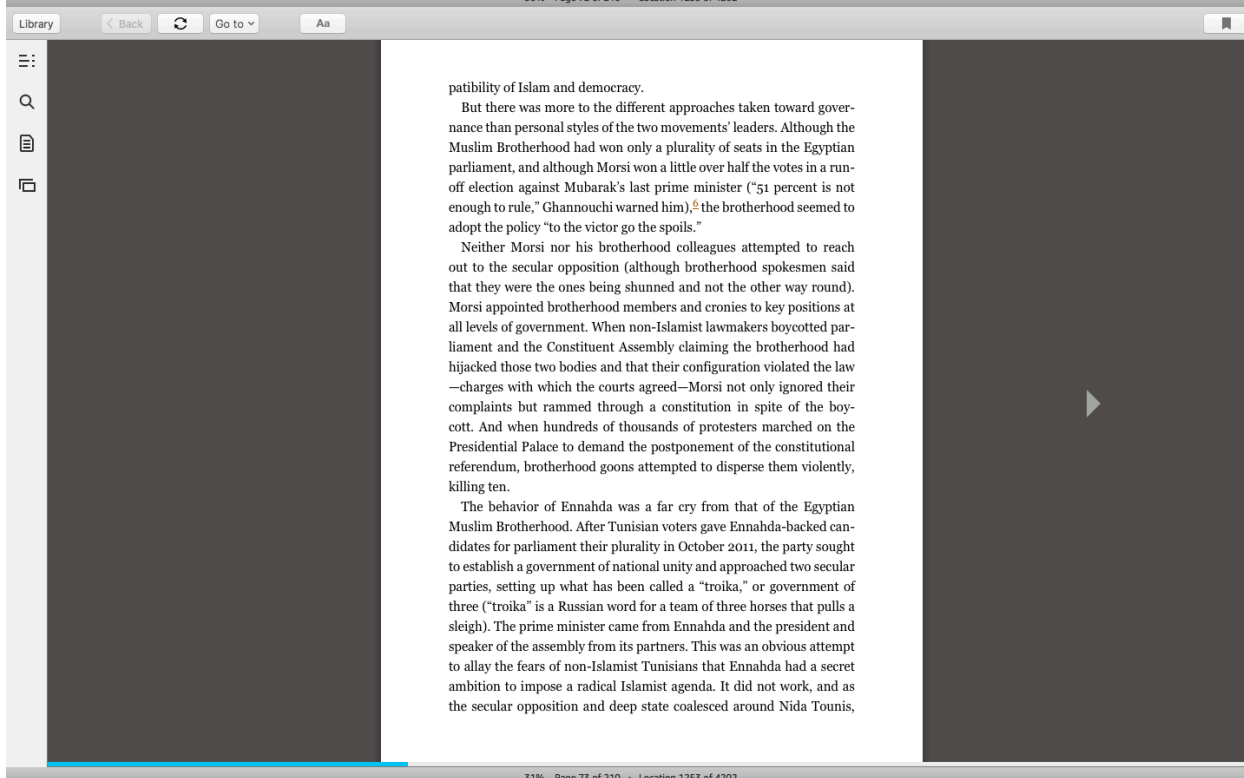
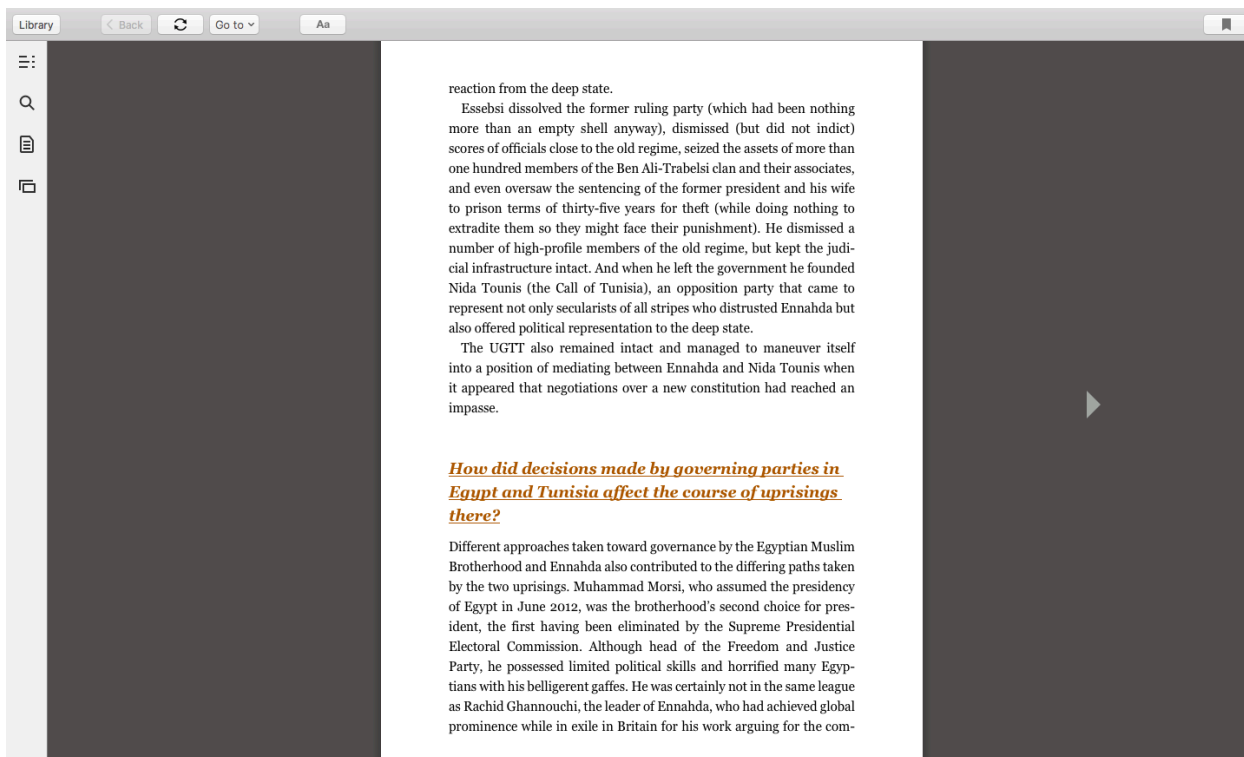
Because salafism is only a technique, the truth salafis uncover varies

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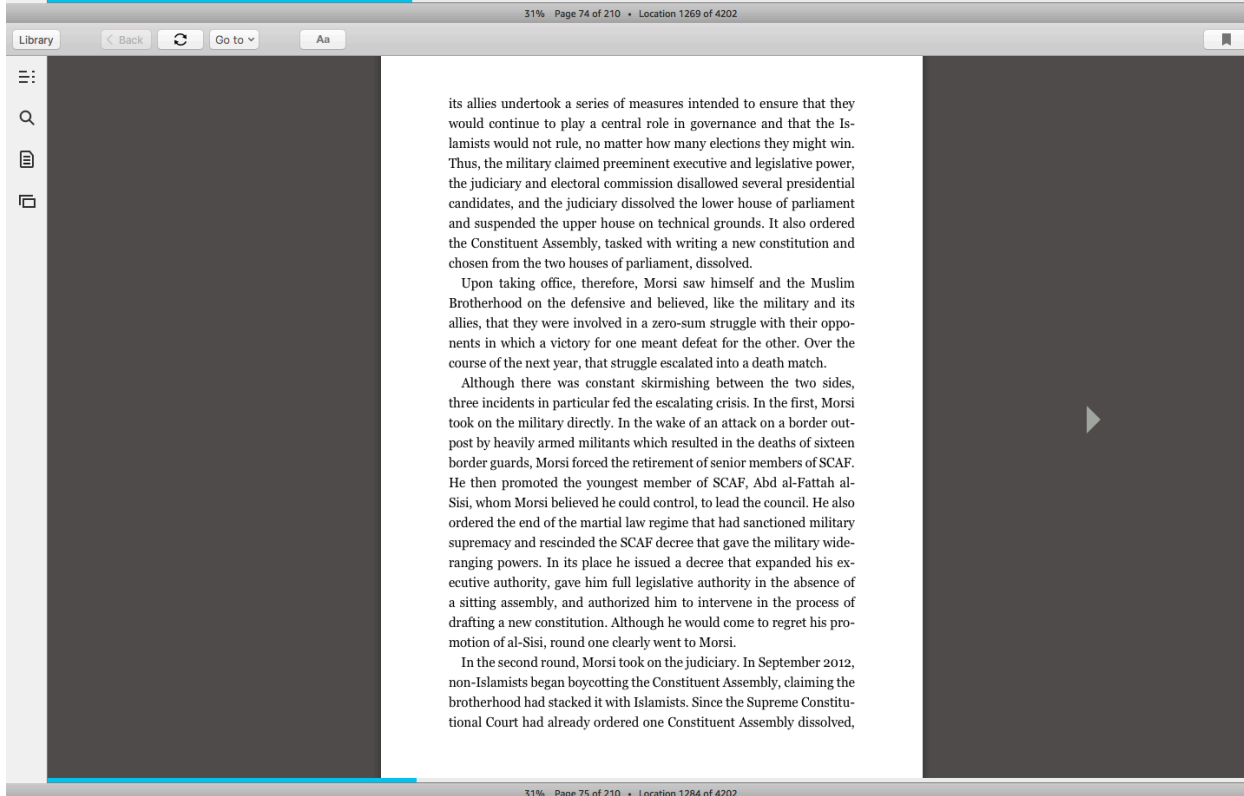
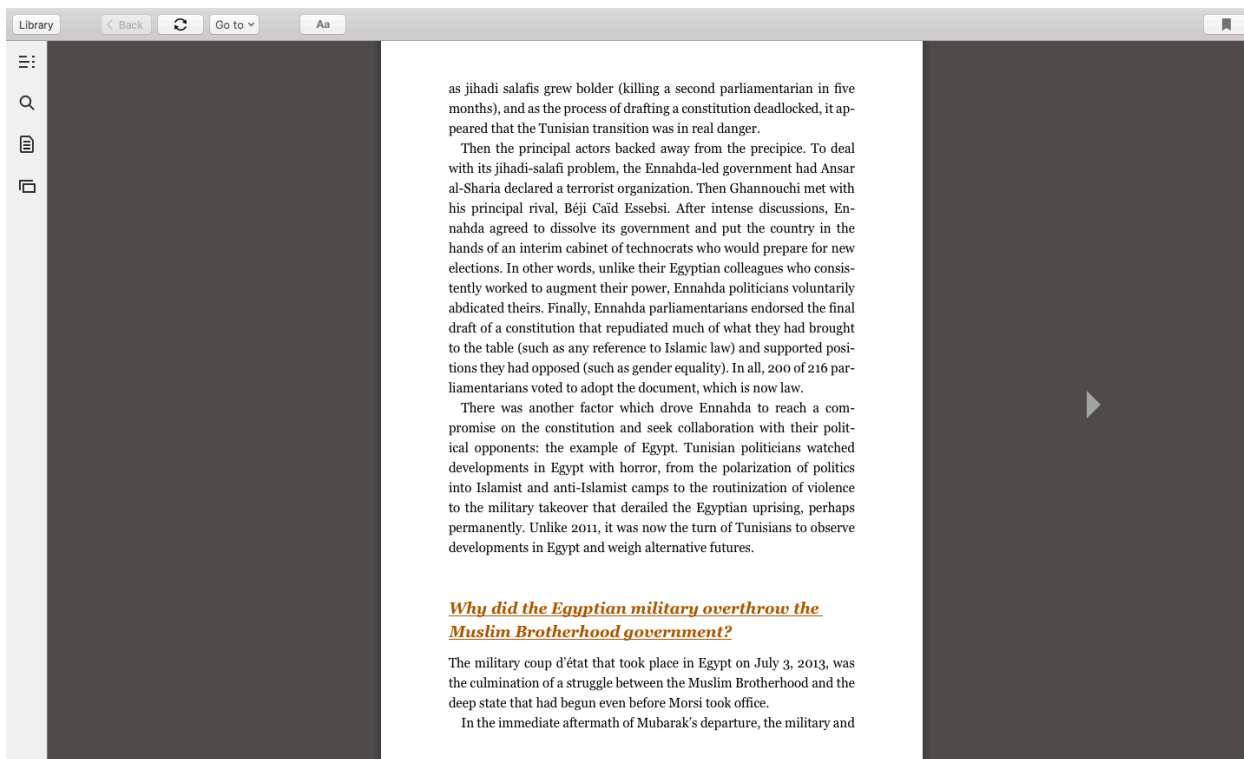




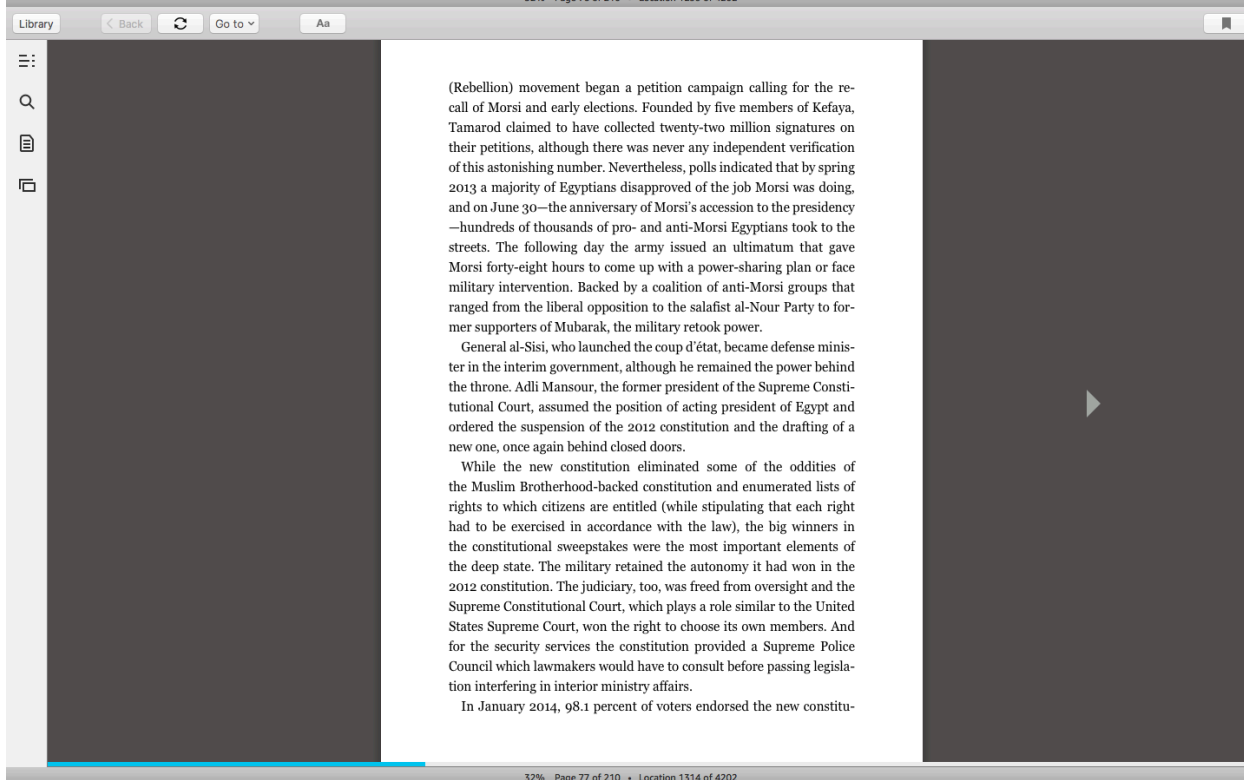
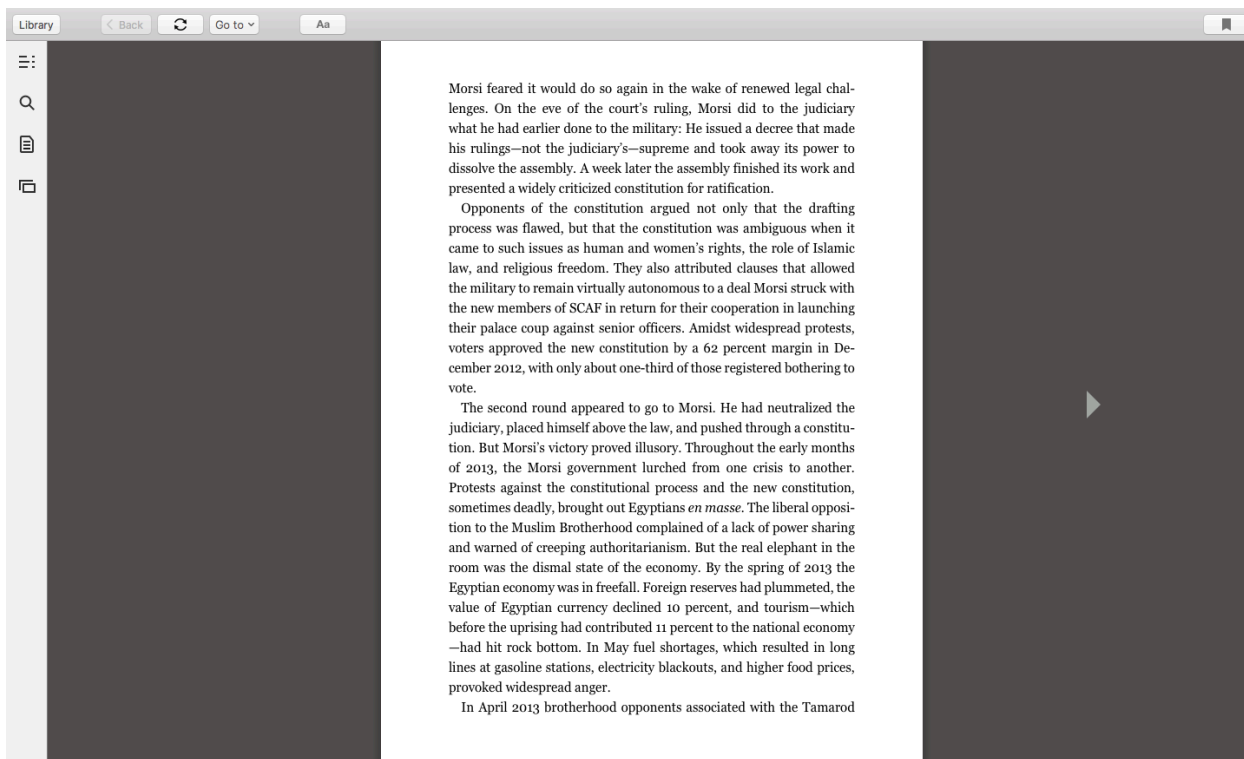


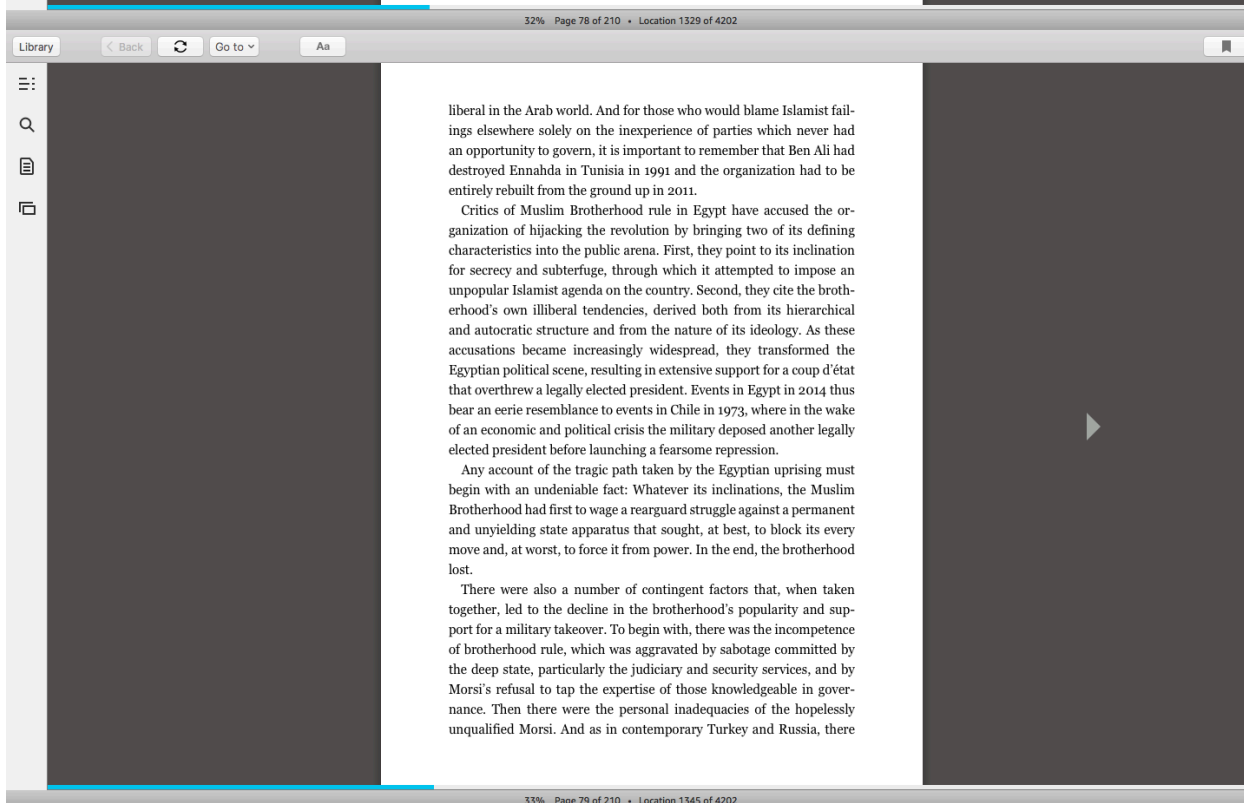
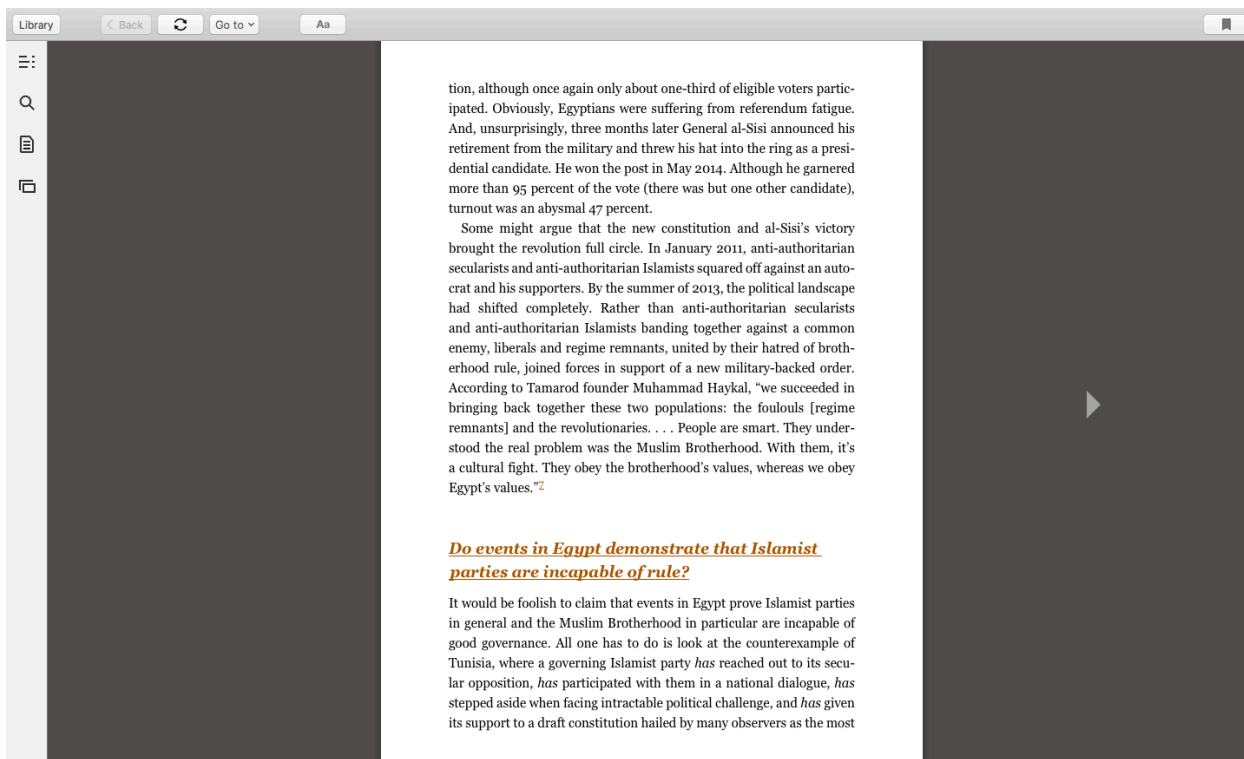


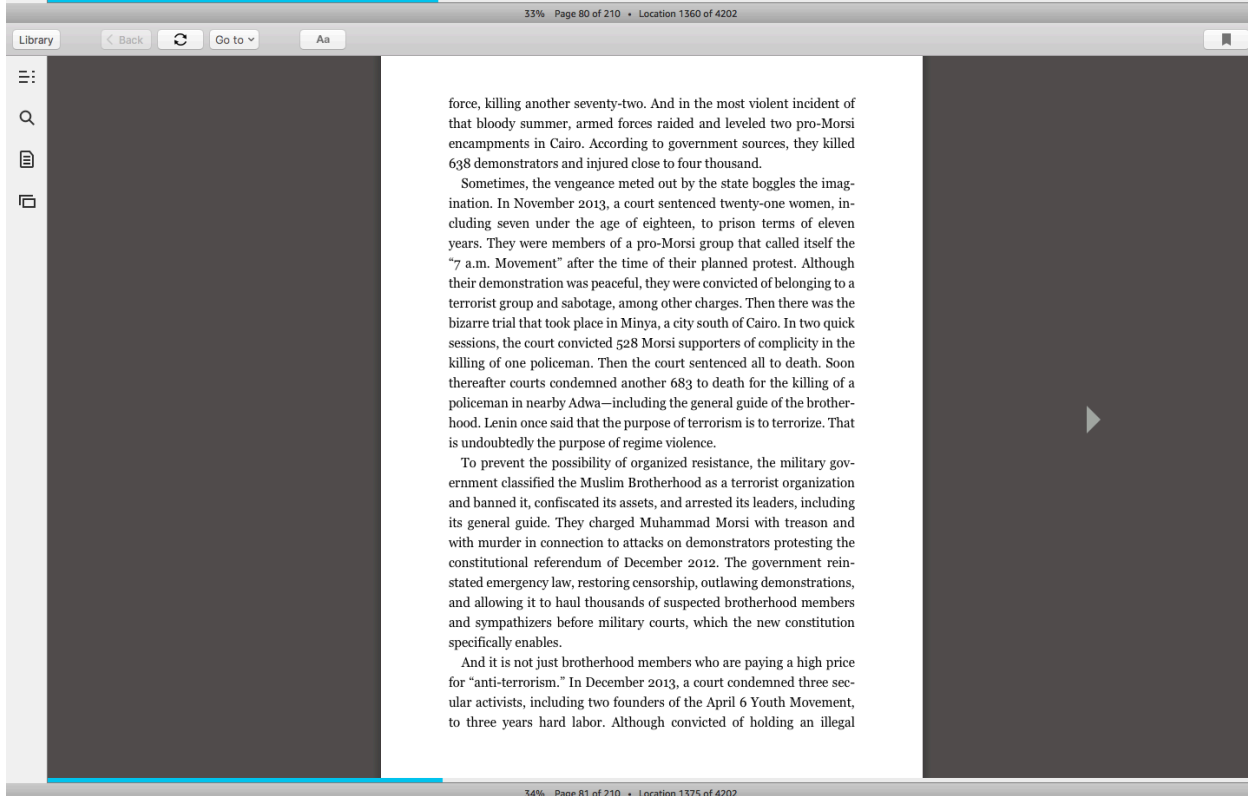
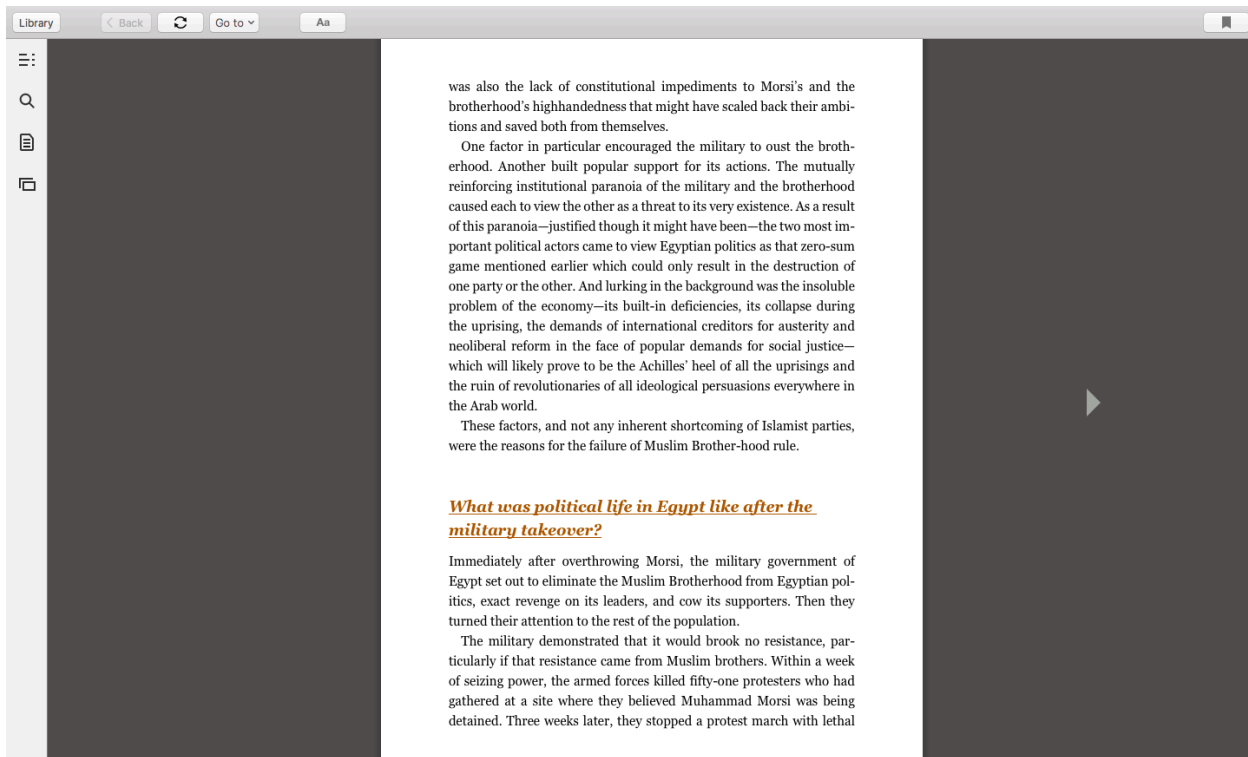












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demonstration, what they were involved in was far more dangerous for authorities. Their plan was to reanimate the movement that found expression in those eighteen days in Tahrir Square so that Egyptians might come to see that the military and the Muslim Brotherhood were not the only alternatives for their future.

**How does the Egyptian uprising help us understand the other uprisings?**

For many observers, the Egyptian uprising provides the gold standard according to which other uprisings should be appraised or viewed. For example, every year since 2011 the international media, along with Syrian opposition groups, have commemorated the anniversary of the outbreak of the Syrian uprising on March 15—the date in 2011 when a group modeled on the April 6 Youth Movement of Egypt held a demonstration in Damascus. Like its counterpart, the Syrian group consisted of educated youths who aspired to bring down the regime employing social media and nonviolent protest. Unlike its counterpart, however, its efforts were in vain. The demonstration brought together a minuscule number of protesters and was easily broken up by the security services. The actual Syrian uprising erupted on the spur of the moment four days later in two places far from Damascus. Unlike the Egyptian uprising, then, the Syrian uprising was spontaneous and lacked a core leadership that could define its goals and tactics—a state of affairs that goes a long way in explaining why the Syrian uprising became what it became. Using the Egyptian model to understand events in Syria leads us down a blind alley.

There are three factors that acted in combination to make the Egyptian uprising different from any other:

1. The Egyptian uprising never got a chance to play itself out. Like the uprising in Tunisia, it was interrupted by a military coup d'état.

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2. Unlike any other state in the Arab world except Tunisia, Egypt possesses a permanent and unyielding state apparatus—a product of two hundred years of state-building. This apparatus—the deep state—proved impossible to dismantle with a single blow, as happened in other places. And it would continue to resist every effort at reform or restructuring.
3. In Egypt a popular mass-based Islamist opposition—the Muslim Brotherhood—was waiting in the wings. The Mubarak government tolerated the brotherhood so long as it did not overstep designated bounds. In most other places, the Islamist opposition had either been obliterated during the anti-Islamist campaigns of the 1980s–1990s or was amalgamated with other opposition elements. Thus, in Egypt there was an organized, independent Islamist bloc that could and did co-opt anti-regime sentiment. As a result, what began as a secular/Islamist alliance against autocracy devolved into an Islamist/anti-Islamist struggle for power.

**What are the five biggest myths about the Egyptian uprising?**

After the dramatic downfall of Hosni Mubarak following eighteen days of protests, a number of myths have clouded the understanding of the initial phase of the Egyptian uprising in the popular imagination. Since those myths provide the lens through which many observers view the other uprisings, making them seem somehow substandard in comparison, it is time to put them to rest.

1. *Technology-savvy youths brought down Mubarak.* This is wrong on two counts. First, data collected after the fact indicate that 59 percent of Egyptian protesters were between the ages of 25 and 44—a rather expansive definition of “youth.” Furthermore, as we have seen, in Egypt (as in Tunisia and Yemen) labor played a critical role

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