

Analyzing Egyptian and American Argumentation Regarding Flight 990

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the Egyptian and American media coverage and official reports regarding Flight 990 from the perspective of argumentation analysis. This incident is still a matter of debate. Since the crash of Flight 990 until now, the Egyptian and American media are still addressing this incident because the exact reason behind the crash of Flight 990 is still vague. It also aims at determining the reason or reasons that caused the crash of Flight 990 depending on what has been reported by the Egyptian and the US media along with the official reports issued by ECAA and NTSB. Both sides, Egypt and US, have their own argumentation regarding the crash of Flight 990. The role of argumentation analysis is to investigate which of these arguments is considered a valid or invalid argument. Furthermore, it makes use of Wageih's model. Based on the data analyzed, there are derelictions from both sides. Egypt has relinquished its rights to investigate the accident and referred the investigation to the NTSB. The American side has jumped to the conclusion without paying attention to many other decisive factors that could change the final finding.

Key words:

flight 990, ECAA report, NTSB report, argumentation analysis

1. Introduction

This paper examines the fall/the crash of Flight 990 showing the linguistic analysis regarding the argumentation between Egypt and the US. Argumentation happens all around us in messages intended to influence our beliefs and behaviors. Some of these messages will attempt to persuade us by providing knowledge and argument. Some messages will be directed at our feelings, aspirations, anxieties, biases, or superstitions. Sometimes people come into contact with friends, relatives, instructors, employers, the media, advertising, editorialists, and politicians in order to persuade others by encasing their arguments in seductive appeals.

Arguments occur when people disagree on something or when they do not know but want to know what something is. Controversy is always present in argumentation, whether it is the controversy of competing points of view or the controversy of what is the best solution.

Argumentation is a set of notions or ideas, called techniques, used to understand how we reason and how we convey reasons to others as we try to persuade them. Argumentation is used to communicate with others. Simply, argumentation is a set of concepts and ideas that focuses on the application of logic in communication. Argumentation in discourse is always related to a specific perspective, or standpoint, on a given issue. Argumentation is required when opinions on this subject differ or are assumed to differ. Argumentation starts when the standpoint of the arguer is not accepted but is controversial. Argumentation is used to support one's position or to refute someone else's.

On October 31, 1999, about 100 kilometers south of Nantucket, Massachusetts, EgyptAir Flight 990 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean in the early morning hours, killing 217 persons aboard. Flight 990 departed from Los Angeles and

stopped in New York City before continuing to Cairo. The airplane had two crews for the 10-hour transatlantic leg of the flight. The flight departed from John F. Kennedy International Airport at about 1:20 AM. Less than 25 minutes later, the airplane leveled at its assigned altitude of 33,000 feet (10,000 meters). However, at around 1:50 AM, the airplane started to rapidly descend at a 40° angle, reaching an altitude of approximately 16,000 feet (4,900 meters). It was traveling much faster than a Boeing 767 is capable of safely during the dive, getting close to the speed of sound. Less than a minute later, the aircraft's descent stopped, it regained height, climbing to a height of around 25,000 feet (7,600 meters), and then the course was altered. The aircraft then started its deadly descent before losing its left engine and plummeting into the water. All the 203 passengers and 14 crew members were killed. There were Egyptian military officers among the passengers returning from military training in the United States. Their presence on that flight led some to suspect that the flight had been targeted by a missile.

Egypt had the right to investigate the crash according to international aviation agreements, but initially, Egypt deferred the investigation to the American National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). More than 70 percent of the airplane debris was recovered from water about 230 feet (70 meters) deep. Gamil Al-Batouty, the Relief First Officer (RFO), took over the copilot seat only 22 minutes after departure, according to the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR). The autopilot was disengaged and the aircraft started its first descent as the captain stepped out of the cockpit to visit the restroom. The captain returned to the cockpit and asked, “What’s happening? What’s happening?” Al-Batouty repeated, in Arabic, “I rely on God” *توكلت على الله*. Before the electrical system failed and flight data recording ceased, the

engines were shut off about 15 seconds. The NTSB attributed the crash to the action of Al-Batouty.

In Egypt, the NTSB findings were unpopular. After conducting its own investigation and issuing a report, the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority (ECAA) rejected the possibility that Al-Batouty crashed the plane. The sheared rivets in the elevator control mechanism caused the problem, and everyone in the cockpit was working together to regain control up to the time the plane hit the water, according to the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority. NTSB attributed the crash to the action of Al-Batouty because of the phrases he repeated many times “I rely on God” *توكلت على الله*. Muslims and Christians, especially in Eastern communities, use this phrase frequently. In addition, there are verses in the Holy Quran as well as the Bible that talked about reliance on God.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

People, sometimes, disagree with each other. That is the nature of human beings. People argue about certain topics and each of them is trying to convince the other side with his/her point of view. The normal usage of the term argument in our daily life refers to two or more people engaged in interpersonal conflict. Thus, the argument becomes a synonym for verbal dispute.

2.2. Definition of Argumentation

Eemeren (2018) shows that any argument starts when there is a difference of opinion, whether that difference of opinion is actual or **merely** something the arguer imagines. Argumentation happens when two people dispute on a premise

and one of them assumes a viewpoint that the other person does not. (p. 1).

Argumentation is "a verbal, social, and rational action intended for persuading and defending a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a particular viewpoint by proposing one or more assertions designed to justify that stance." (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 1).

Eemeren et al. (2009) define argumentation as a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judgment. (p. 5). Argumentation is a type of instrumental communication that uses reasoning and evidence to persuade listeners or readers to believe or behave in a certain way. (Rybacki & Rybacki, 2014, p. 3).

These definitions suggest that argumentation has some characteristics. First, **argumentation** is an activity in which the participants use language in order to achieve certain things whether supporting or defending their viewpoints or attacking each other. Second, argumentation is a social activity. It is a communication process that exists between persons or groups exchanging their viewpoints and ideas in order to settle a controversial issue. The main purpose of argumentation is to resolve or settle an existing dispute or different opinions regarding a specific matter.

Hansson and Hadorn (2016) argue that the term "argument analysis" **refers** to a broad concept that includes a variety of approaches and instruments, such as those for conceptual analysis, decision structuring, evaluating arguments, and evaluating decision options. Analysis of the arguments is necessary to make the arguments clear. It specifies implicit premises and inference processes, clearly illustrates the

argument, assesses the validity of the inferences, and explores areas of agreement and disagreement. (p. 4).

Walton (1992) sees "argumentation as a collaboration, [the] constructive working **out** of disagreements by verbal interactions in order to resolve a conflict of opinions." (p. xi). Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) show that argumentation primarily aims to resolve a difference of opinion over the authenticity of a viewpoint by appealing to the reasonableness of the opposing party. (pp. 11–18). Truth-seeking and truth-preservation are two purposes of argumentation, but they can also be used to influence decisions and bring about particular outcomes. Tindale (2004) people who consider truth as the primary goal of argumentation are those who are most eager to include a criterion for truth in their criteria for evaluating arguments. (p. 174).

Eemeren and Garssen (2019) shows that the term "argumentation" has been defined differently by different scholars. However, there seems to be universal consensus that arguing always entails making an effort to convince others through reasoned discourse. Although the majority of argumentation scholars concur that there are descriptive and normative aspects to the study of argumentation, they have different ideas about how these aspects should be handled in actual research. (p. 13).

Argumentative discourses are without a doubt complicated textual data in many ways. Simply understanding the words, or even the phrases they are composed of, cannot properly convey their meaning. The meaning of the words, their syntagmatic organization within sentences, the argumentative specifications attached to different argumentative indicators, the way the text articulates and hierarchizes different viewpoints through its enunciative layering, a knowledge of the interdiscourse, and of some elements of the context in

which the argument takes place are all factors that must be taken into consideration when analyzing argumentative discourse. (Eemeren & **Garsen**,2019, p.16).

Wageih (2007) defines argumentation a style in which a speaker or a writer is **trying** to persuade the reader or the recipient with his/her viewpoint. He (2007) also states that an argument consists of three main components:

- **Claim:** expresses the stance of a writer or speaker. In other words, a claim, in other words, is a conclusion. There is a close relation between claim and refutation in which refutation expresses the intention of a writer or a speaker to refute an anticipated objection to his/her views from the other side.
- **Data/Ground:** the main purpose of data is to support the claim. There are three types of data:
 - **Evidence:** is to provide numbers and percentages.
 - **Values:** is to provide social or religious examples in order to support the data.
 - **Credibility:** is to provide accredited resources.
- **Warrant:** is the link between claim and data.

There are two types of argumentation including:

- a. Parataxis argumentation characterized by the repetition of phrases in order to mobilize the masses.
- b. Syllogism argumentation characterized by focusing and supporting the claim through providing evidence. (Wageih, 2007, pp. 257-258).

2.3. Argumentation and Language

Oswald et al. (2018) show **that** according to the following, there is a relationship **between** language and argumentation.:

- a- Descriptive prescriptive examines the language the speaker uses when making an argument. It looks into the linguistic tools that speakers use to perform arguments in communication, such as syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic tools.
- b- Explanatory perspective that looks into how language is utilized to accomplish argumentation's objectives.
- c- Semantic perspective. This perspective, first introduced by French linguist Oswald Ducrot, views the connection between argumentation and language as an essential one. Under this perspective, the linguistic system is semantically taken to incorporate an argumentative direction, in the sense that linguistic units are deemed to carry intrinsic argumentative orientations. (p. 2).

Walton (2007) shows that there are two methods to analyze an argument: first, by seeing how it affects the audience, and second, logically. You can evaluate an argument by identifying the missing premises on which it is predicated, after which you can determine if it is true or fallacious. (pp. 8-9).

2.4. Argumentation and Persuasion

Eemeren et al. (2009) show that the goal of persuasion is to get an audience to agree with a specific point of view. The act of arguing itself entails an appeal to the reasonableness of the audience, for better or worse, hence argumentation is the reasoning part of persuasion.

Rybacki and Rybacki (2014) postulate that through using the idea of reasonableness, we may better understand how argumentation and persuasion are related. But, what is the difference between argumentation and persuasion? Written or spoken messages are frequently created by people to affect others' attitudes and opinions, and these messages may appeal to either reason or emotion. Other persuasive messages rely on

eliciting an emotional response from the recipient rather than a rational one. Persuasion is the study of how the audiences are affected by messages delivered. Argumentation is mainly concerned with using evidence and logic to appeal to the rational side of human nature. (p. 4).

2.5. Fallacies

Hamblin (1970) defines the fallacy as "an argument that seems to be valid but is not so". Fallacies are the violations of the standards for critical discourse that obstruct or hinder the settlement of a disagreement. They can be committed by either party and can happen at any phase of discussion. (Eemeren & Henkemans, 2017, p. 96).

Wageih, (2007) shows fallacies as follows:

- a- Fallacies of warrants in which there is no correlation between the claim and the ground including hasty generalization, cause, and defect, using unreliable ground "data."
- b- The fallacy of Rebuttal and Qualifier. In this case, the writer or the speaker is fully aware of the situation and the potential reactions regarding that situation and does not give the chance for the other to object or criticize his claim. In addition, the writer or the speaker adopts a stance that does not give the impression of objectivity.
- c- The fallacy of repetition and ignoring the question. The writer or the speaker is trying to support his claim through repetition instead of providing a clear evidence to support his claim. In addition, the writer or the speaker fails to understand or specify the main question, intentionally or inadvertently, regarding the argument.
- d- The fallacy of shifting the burden. It means that the writer or the speaker is shifting the burden of proofing the argument on the others.

- e- The fallacy of equivocation and defamation. If the argument has more than one meaning and is taken as only one meaning without considering the other possible meanings. The fallacy of defamation refers to defaming the other person without focusing on the main claim. (pp. 255-257).

The researcher will analyze the arguments adopted by Egypt and US; in addition, scrutinize these argumentations based on the kinds of fallacies mentioned above:

The US. Arguments

Argument #1: The crash of EgyptAir 990 came as a result of the Relief First Officer's flight control inputs.

After the insistence of the Relief First Officer “Al-Batouty” to take control of the plane using his seniority to urge the junior co-pilot to cede the right seat ahead of the scheduled crew change, he turned off the autopilot after saying “I made my decision now”, which was widely published in all US media, upon leaks from NTSB. At that time, the airplane leveled at its assigned altitude of 33,000 feet (10,000 meters). However, at approximately 1:50 AM it began to descend rapidly, at a very steep angle of 40°, to an altitude of about 16,000 feet (4,900 meters). During the fall, the aircraft approached the speed of sound, far exceeding the maximum safe speed for a Boeing 767. After the descent stopped in less than a minute, the aircraft altered course and regained height, climbing to a height of roughly 25,000 feet (7,600 meters). After losing its left engine, the aircraft started its catastrophic descent before crashing into the water.

NTSB concluded that the crash of EgyptAir 990 was due to the co-pilot's manipulation of the airplane controls. In addition, the organizations representing the families of the victims from the United States issued a statement, expressing

disappointment, that "Egypt continues to resist this unavoidable conclusion, even after the tragedy of September 11." NTSB issued its conclusion based on the information captured by Flight Data Recorder "FDR" which showed that the autopilot was turned off, both engines were turned off, the right and left elevators were in opposite directions, and the repetition of the phrase "I rely on God" "Tawakkaltu ala Allah."

In this regard, the claim was that the Relief First Officer crashed Flight 990. In addition, NTSB provided credibility in which FDR showed that the autopilot was turned off. For the abovementioned argument, US media, as well as NTSB, showed that the probable cause of the EgyptAir 990 accident was the airplane's departure from a normal cruise flight and subsequent impact with the Atlantic Ocean as a result of The Relief First Officer's flight control inputs. The reason for the Relief First Officer's actions was not determined.

In this regard, NTSB had jumped to the conclusion that the Relief First Officer had committed suicide and this was the end of the discussion. NTSB did not exert much effort to be sure whether Al-Batouty had crashed the plane or there was something else that caused that crash. In a documentary movie broadcast on Aljazeera Channel, Phil Radel (2019) states that the NTSB report was flawed in several areas. They neglected to look at the other relevant areas that were found. Not only FDR and CVR but also parts of the elevator control system. In addition, NTSB had lots of investigations to do at that time like Flight TWA and lots of other investigations. Once they heard the phrase "I rely on God" they jumped to the conclusion saying it is a pilot suicide. (11:36). In this regard, Jim Hall (2019), director of NTSB, replied saying that NTSB has a good reputation refusing that but we extended the time of the investigation. (16:50). NTSB neglected the report of the Egyptian pilot who was the Captain of the aircraft from Los

Anglos Airport to JFK Airport in New York regarding a problem in the autopilot that had caused him to disconnect the autopilot.

Many issues may cause the autopilot to disengage. During the session of hearing the CVR, they heard an unintelligible word that was hard to define some heard as control it and others heard as hydraulic. This may interpret why the autopilot was disengaged. In this regard, it lies under the fallacy of warrant in which there was no correlation between the claim and the data in which NTSB jumped to the conclusion without paying more attention to other elements that might cause the crash. In addition, the workload of NTSB as well as the shortage in time was one of the major elements that affected the investigation process as well as many other factors. NTSB adopted the idea that Al-Batouty crashed the plane after days of the beginning of the investigation without considering any other factors.

In addition, an article published in The Washington Post on June 18, 2000, entitled “Egypt offers a new scenario in Flight 990 crash” showed that Al-Batouty was not alone in the cockpit during the fall of the plane. If Al-Batouty intended to commit suicide or crash the plane, the first thing to do was to lock the door of the cockpit. But what happened was there were a number of people in the cockpit during the fatal fall trying to save the plane. NTSB overlooked the pieces of evidence that showed Al-Batouty had nothing to do with this crash. This lies under the fallacy of rebuttal and Qualifier.

NTSB did not provide clear evidence that proves Al-Batouty was responsible for the crash. All US news and mass media advertised this claim, upon leaks from NTSB, and they considered these claims as clear evidence. This lies under the fallacy of repetition making the claim as the evidence without providing more shreds of evidence to prove that claim. In

addition, NTSB did not listen to the other side's viewpoint ignoring its claims. This also weakens the argument. The NTSB shifted the burdens of proof to Egypt and this strategy from a linguistic perspective weakens the argumentation or the claim of the NTSB.

The NTSB reported that the FDR and Traffic Control Tower radar showed that the airplane leveled at its assigned altitude of 33,000 feet (10,000 meters). However, at approximately 1:50 AM it began to descend rapidly, at a very steep angle of 40°, to an altitude of about 16,000 feet (4,900 meters). Less than a minute later the descent stopped, and the airplane regained altitude, up to about 25,000 feet (7,600 meters). The truth behind this is that the Traffic Control Tower radar cannot read the altitude but it reads longitude and latitude. This shows that the pieces of evidence or the data NTSB provided were not precise.

According to the NTSB report as well as the leaks to US mass media, Al-Batouty crashed the plane. If Al-Batouty crashed the plane, the first thing to do was to lock the cockpit door but he didn't. Captain Habashi returned to the cockpit and tried with the help of Al-Batouty to save the aircraft from this lethal fall. The surprising issue was that during the fall, there were five people in the cockpit trying to save the plane. In all these matters NTSB did not pay any attention. NTSB insisted that Al-Batouty deliberately crashed the plane. Upon the fallacy of rebuttal, NTSB had jumped to the conclusion without scrutinizing the other factors. NTSB took a position based on no objectivity. One of the most important pieces of evidence here in this regard was the final report of the FBI that concluded there was no evidence of a criminal act – no evidence of a deliberate act or a suicide – by the Relief First Officer.

Argument #2: The Cockpit Voice Recorder CVR and FDR did not include that the plane was targeted by a missile.

At the early stages of the crash of EgyptAir 990, the exact reason behind the crash was unknown. There was always the possibility of a terrorist attack. Egyptian media saw the crash of EgyptAir 990 as a terrorist act in which a missile brought down the plane and that Al-Batouty was not responsible for the crash. These declarations came after announcing that there were thirty-three army officers and three atomic scientists on board.

According to Ann Brennan, the en-route controller, the air traffic that night was slow. The offshore military exercise zones were inactive. The sky was clear.

Phil Rodol, an aviation expert and engineer, stated that the plane was not targeted by a missile upon the following:

- 1- The CVR and FDR did not include anything that proves the plane had been targeted by a missile.
- 2- The eyewitnesses that night did not see any missile targeting the plane.
- 3- The four radar stations that spotted the plane did not see any missile targeting the plane.
- 4- The circumference of the debris was not more than 400 meters. If the missile hit the aircraft at 33000 feet, the circumference of the debris would be more than 400 meters.

According to NTSB, both CVR and FDR did not include any conversations or data that show the aircraft had been targeted by a missile. William Langewiesche stated that the feeling in Egypt was that all Arabs were under attack and that assault had been planned. FBI announced that it was neither a criminal nor a terrorist incident.

For the claim that the plane was targeted by a missile, CVR, as well as FDR, did not include any of this hypothesis. This argument cannot be taken for granted for three reasons:

The final report of the FBI concluded that there was no evidence of a criminal act – no evidence of a deliberate act or a suicide – by the Relief First Officer.

According to what was mentioned earlier by Phil Radel.

The CVR did not include the phrase Mayday which is a distress call that is used to signal a life-threatening emergency. Here, in this argument, there is no relation between the claim and the data supporting the claim. It lies under the fallacy of warrant.

Argument #3: Al-Batouty's motives.

US media tried to find the motives that drive him to crash the plane. William Langewiesche (2001) states that the FBI discovered that Batouty had a reputation for sexual misbehavior mostly through interviews with Pennsylvania Hotel staff members. It was reported that Al-Batouty had been suspected of exposing himself to teenage girls, masturbating in public, going after female guests to their rooms, and listening to their rooms. He had once been taken in by the hotel security officers for inquiry and warning. The FBI discovered that EgyptAir was aware of these issues and had advised Al-Batouty to behave properly.

In February 2000, an EgyptAir pilot named Hamdi Hanafi Taha landed in England and requested political asylum. He stated that he had information on the accident. NTSB and FBI investigators flew to England to meet him. Taha told them a story confirmed that Al-Batouty had been confronted by the Chief Pilot regarding his behaviors. The other motive the US media brought to the public was that he had five children four of them were grown and doing well but his fifth child was a

ten-year-old girl suffering from lupus. It had been assumed that he was upset due to the illness of his young child. He may have committed suicide for reasons related to his daughter's sickness. He was thinking of his family and his daughter. They could obtain compensation and life insurance to cure his daughter. In addition, Al-Batouty was about to retire. Although, it was unclear whether he was looking forward to it or dreading it.

For the claim regarding Al-Batouty having disruptive behavior, NTSB tried to show the reasons or the motives that made Al-Batouty crash the plane. US media supported the claim of NTSB that Al-Batouty deliberately crashed the plane. They considered that concept as a fact and this was deeply rooted in the minds of the US people. US media adopted an ideology or strategy during the coverage of the crash. It was just like steps to take. First, it was unknown what had happened to Flight 990. Second. Upon leaks from NTSB, Al-Batouty crashed the plane. Third, it was a Muslim suicide. Fourth, after rooting the concept of Muslim suicide, let's now find the motives that pushed Al-Batouty to crash the plane. Among these motives, William Langewiesche stated that the FBI found that Batouty had a reputation for sexual impropriety. Al-Batouty was a religious man who recently had gone to Mecca for Haj. How come a person like that with this reputation would be accused of sexual impropriety?

An article published in The New York Times on November 18, 1999, entitled "The Crash of EgyptAir: The Relief Pilot; Dissecting A Man's Life to Understand His Outlook" showed that there were some motives that pushed Al-Batouty to crash the plane. The writer started his introduction which carries the main idea of the article with some motives like the illness of his daughter and he was about to retire. The writer also added that Al-Batouty had sent money and gifts ahead of him which seemed loaded with meaning. The writer wanted to grab the

attention of the readers that Al-Batouty had already committed the crash and we were trying to find the motives that pushed him to crash the plane.

From the linguistic perspective, this lies under the fallacy of defamation, and the US media supported this claim neglecting the main claim which was the crash of the plane. Instead, they tried to convince the people upon leaks from NTSB - which Jim Hall acknowledged - that Batouty crashed the plane because he had a bad reputation for sexual impropriety and the chief pilot might have threatened disciplinary action upon arrival back to Cairo – despite the public humiliation that would entail. NTSB did not pay any attention to the good reputation of that person. They tried to support their viewpoint by presenting the motives that pushed Al-Batouty to crash the plane, but their claims had no relation to logic. Before boarding, and according to the report of the FBI, Al-Batouty made three phone calls. The first call was with his son informing him that he had bought the tires for his car. The second call was with his daughter informing her that he had the results of her medical analysis from Los Angeles. The third call was with one of his friends who asked Al-Batouty to bring him medicine from the USA informing him that he had bought the medicine. All of these pieces of evidence contradict the hypothesis of NTSB that Batouty crashed the airplane.

Argument #4: There were altercations between the Chief Pilot and Relief First Officer.

Jim Hall, director of NTSB, declares that there was a struggle between Chief Pilot and Relief First Officer upon the information extracted from CVR. When the Chief Pilot made his way back from the toilet and the aircraft was going down, he shouted, “what is happening?” two times. NTSB considered that question as if the two pilots were struggling.

NTSB and US media also showed that there were altercations between the Captain and Relief First Officer.

In this regard, the report showed that there was an argument between the RFO and the Captain, but what actually happened showed that there was no argument at all. The NTSB's report did not include the important fact that there was no argument between the Captain and Al-Batouty when the Captain re-entered the cockpit at 0150:06 after the accident event started. The CVR did not show any kind of arguments.

In a situation like this, The Captain may ask Al-Batouty several questions including: "What are you doing?" "Why are you pushing the controls of the airplane down?" "Leave the controls" or any other form of questions that might be asked, but he did not vocalize such questions, according to the CVR. There was no indication that the Captain thought the RFO had any part with the condition of the airplane. None of this was addressed in the NTSB report. Instead, the Captain repeated that question five times, "What's happening?" The Captain's statements gave no indication that he thought Al-Batouty was acting improperly.

The cockpit door was left open. Al-Batouty would have locked the door if he had a plan to deliberately crash the plane. Upon what was stated in NTSB's report, there is no relation between the claim and the data. NTSB tried to create a scenario that there were arguments between the captain and Al-Batouty, but unfortunately, this claim has no ground or authenticity to follow. NTSB adopted an approach that was whatsoever found or discovered, Al-Batouty crashed the plane. This claim cannot be taken for granted that is because it has no authenticity or data that may support it. NTSB report also showed that there was an argument between Command First Officer and Relief First Officer in which Al-Batouty ordered the Command First Officer not only to vacate the seat

but also to leave the cockpit in order to take control. During the process of translating the CVR, the NTSB team lacked Egyptian cultural sensitivity. According to what was stated in CVR, after some discussion of changing seats, the CFO told the RFO at 0140:35 “... if you want to sit here, there’s no problem.” Then, the RFO told Al-Batouty, “I’ll come back to you, I mean, I will eat and come back, all right?” The Egyptian report (2001) shows that out of the entire CVR transcript on the subject, the NTSB omitted this exchange. In doing so, the NTSB left the reader without the clear evidence that the CFO pointed out that changing places would be “no problem” and that the RFO offered to eat and come back later, an offer that the CFO refused, suggesting, instead, that the RFO eat his meal in the cockpit. According to the Egyptian Team investigators who listened to the CVR, the RFO was not ordering the CFO out of the cockpit, but rather, was simply asking to take an early turn on the flight deck – a procedure that does not violate any EgyptAir policy or ECAA regulation. Supposedly, if any adverse inference could be elicited from the RFO’s behavior, the Captain would have intervened and made his views known. The fact that the Captain did not intervene assures that the request of the RFO was not inappropriate. (p. 20).

The report also shows the RFO’s statement at 0147:55 “Look here’s the new first officer’s pen. Give it to him. God spares you.” (p. 3). The only imaginable purpose in picking this one statement from the otherwise normal, routine cockpit conversation is, again, to imply that the RFO was trying to make others leave the cockpit. The more significant issue is that the NTSB report fails to mention that the CFO was still in the cockpit at the time the RFO asked that the pen be returned and that the CFO was still in the cockpit at 0147:03 -- seven minutes after he agreed to change seats with the RFO.

ECAA report shows that the NTSB final report fails to point out that the RFO did not ask the CFO or anyone else to leave the cockpit. In fact, the transcript recognizes many different voices in the cockpit and numerous times when the cockpit door is “opening,” suggesting that there was substantial traffic in and out of the cockpit. Consequently, it would have been extremely difficult for a crew member seeking to be alone to be sure that would occur when others were so freely – and frequently -- present in the cockpit. Furthermore, there is no proof even if the RFO was alone, as the NTSB confirms, that he took any action, such as preventing other crewmembers from entering through locking the cockpit door. (p. 21).

These facts, neither mentioned nor discussed in the final report of NTSB, present a picture of a busy cockpit where personnel enter and go according to their own inclinations rather than as part of the RFO's well-coordinated strategy.

These were all the claims of the US side, now the researcher is going to scrutinize the claims of the Egyptian side.

2.2.2 Egypt's Arguments

Argument #1: The crash of EgyptAir 990 was due to a malfunction in the elevator.

Egypt refused all claims concerning that Batouty was behind the crash of EgyptAir 990. There was no supporting evidence for the NTSB's finding that the Relief First Officer intentionally crashed the plane. Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority report concluded that the probable cause of the crash was a malfunction in the elevator. The former president Hosni Mubarak in an interview stated that the cause of the crash was a malfunction in the tail systems. According to Jamal Araam who was the captain of the same aircraft, Boeing

767 from New York Airport to Los Anglos Airport a day before the crash, there was a problem with the autopilot.

For this claim, Egypt refused to believe that Al-Batouty crashed the plane as stated by NTSB. The Egyptian investigation team as well as the report of the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority concluded that the probable cause of the crash was a malfunction in the elevator system. This idea was supported by many experts in the field of aviation investigation. Egyptian report supported his findings with pieces of evidence showing that the cause of the crash was due to this malfunction. One of these pieces of evidence was when the FAA issued two Airworthiness Directives concerning the Boeing 767 bellcrank assemblies. A total of 152 or more rivets in the bell crank assembly were discovered to be broken. Before the aircraft could take to the air again, 52 of these needed to be replaced. According to the report of the Egyptian Civil Aviation Authority, the following incidents involving the Boeing 767 elevator system are included in the SDR:

On September 12, 1994, United Airlines reported that a B767-300 airplane (serial -number 27159) experienced the same issue, a frozen elevator condition (when descending through 11,000 feet) and that it needed 30 pounds of forward pressure to get the lift free. An examination was done after landing and found no errors in the elevator control system.

On June 20, 1996, the same airplane reported that it was “unable to maintain altitude at 10,000 feet while the autopilot was disconnected and the elevator was stiff. After 5 to 10 minutes of using stabilizer trim, while pushing up and down on the control column, something let go at 4,000 feet and the airplane flew normally.” Again, a post-landing evaluation revealed no issues with the elevator control system.

On March 27, 2001, American Airlines reported that one of its B767-300 airplanes was having issues with pitch control as it

descended through 6,000 feet en route to Paris, France. One of the elevators—believed to be the right elevator—was confirmed to be frozen in response to both autopilot and manual inputs by a post-incident assessment of the FDR. The NTSB letter to the ECAA dated April 19, 2001, referred to this incident as a binding of the elevator aft quadrant. (p. 25). ECAA shows that the NTSB reports that there is no clear and credible evidence of a possible mechanical malfunction regarding Flight 990. (p. 26).

Egypt supported its claim with similar incidents for the same Boeing 767. In addition, experts in the field of aviation investigation rather than the NTSB team supported the claim of Egypt that Al-Batouty did not crash the plane but it was a malfunction in the elevator system.

In this regard and from a linguistic perspective, the data included in Egypt's report support the claim. When the claim is supported with pieces of evidence similar to your case, it makes the argument more authentic and logically accepted and cannot be refuted. The pieces of evidence Egypt used to make the argument accepted. That is how Egypt supported its claim.

Argument #2: The plane was targeted by a missile.

In Egypt, the widely accepted idea was that Batouty was not responsible for the crash of EgyptAir 990. One of the probable causes of the crash was that plane was targeted by a missile. According to the two Jordanian pilots Awad Al-Rashid and Ahmed Khafagah, who were flying the nearby route of the EgyptAir 990, reported that they suddenly saw the plane explode in the air. In addition to the Jordanian pilots, a German pilot, who was also flying nearby the route of EgyptAir 990, reported that he saw three (3) objects heading toward the plane. Also, a fishing boat captain reported the same. During the process of rescuing the passengers, it was really hard to find the bodies of passengers. What they found

during that process were only human tissues and remains. This means that Batouty did not intend to crash the airplane, on the other side he was trying to save the plane.

In addition, this claim was supported because there were thirty-three (33) Army Officers and three (3) Atomic Scientists on board. The EgyptAir 990 was heading from New York to Cairo, with 217 people aboard. The aircraft was carrying 199 passengers, 79 of them were Egyptians and 18 crew members. Among the 79 Egyptian passengers, there were 3 atomic scientists and 33 army officers. One of the 3 atomic scientists was a student of Professor Yahia Al-Mashad, a well-known atomic professor. In addition, the 33 army officers were on military training in the US returning to Cairo. One of the stories Egypt's media talked about was an officer who discovered a malfunction in one of the US important radars. It was easy for America to handle the malfunction in the radars on its territories, but what about the radars that were sold to other countries? In addition, this would cost billions of dollars to repair this malfunction.

Upon this and according to Egyptian news, the easiest solution is to get rid of them all. It is just like putting all your eggs in one basket. For this claim, Egyptian media supported the idea that the plane was targeted by a missile. Lots of rumors spread around the concept of conspiracy theory in which the plane was hit by a missile. But, Egypt's report did not include anything in this regard. There are pieces of evidence that support the concept that the plane was not hit by a missile. Ann Brennan, the en-route controller, reported that the air traffic that night was slow. The offshore military exercise zones were inactive. The sky was clear.

Also, Phil Radel (2019) states that the plane was not targeted by a missile according to the following:

1. The CVR and FDR did not include anything regarding the plane being targeted by a missile.
2. The eyewitnesses that night did not see any missile targeting the plane.
3. The four radar stations that spotted the plane did not see any missile targeting the plane.
4. The circumference of the debris was not more than 400 meters. If the missile hit the aircraft at 33000 feet, the circumference of the debris would be more than 400 meters. (8:37)

In addition, the FBI announced that it was neither a criminal nor a terrorist incident. For what was stated by the two Jordanian pilots and the German pilot, who were flying nearby the route of EgyptAir 990, they reported that they saw three (3) objects heading toward the plane but, there was nothing tangible or physical evidence like official reports from the two Jordanian pilots or the German pilot or a satellite photo to be taken as evidence that the plane was targeted by a missile.

The researcher can elicit from these inputs that the plane was not targeted by a missile because there isn't a sherd of clear evidence to support the claim that the cause of the crash was due to the plane being targeted by a missile.

Argument #3: The scheduled time for the plane at JFK Airport was 45 minutes but the plane departed the airport at 0120.

The scheduled time for the plane was delayed for 2 hours and 20 minutes, and then the control tower requested the pilot to change the route and this route was not recorded in the aviation schedule. In addition, he also requested the pilot to change the frequency. After three minutes of changing frequency, the plane plunged into the ocean. When the plane

was delayed to depart at 0120, the enrollment of the departure time in the aviation schedule was delayed. In addition, informing the competent authorities including US Air Force and Air Defense was delayed. When the control tower requested the pilot to change the route, the Air Defense would see the plane as an unknown plane or target and had no information regarding that plane.

In a case like this, the Air Defense has to communicate with the plane captain first before taking any measures or steps like what happened when Gadhafi, the Libyan ex-president, was on board coming to Egypt during the war of October 1973. Egyptian Air Defense tried to communicate with the captain of the plane but there was no response. They had received an order to bring the plane down. Seconds before launching the missile, they had received a call not to target the plane. Back to Flight 900, when the frequency changed, any communications between the plane and any military or civilian ground stations were lost except with the control tower. The US Air Defense considered the plane as an enemy target. Under these circumstances, the US Air Defense targeted the plane. This was like what the two Jordanian pilots Awad Al-Rashid and Ahmed Khafagah reported when they returned that they suddenly saw the plane explode in the air.

The Egyptian media claimed that the scheduled time for the plane was deliberately delayed for 2 hours and 20 minutes, and then the control tower requested the pilot to change the route and this route was not recorded in the aviation schedule. In addition, he also requested the pilot to change the frequency.

For the delay, there is a controversy between the two stories of Egypt and the US. The Egyptian claim was that the plane was intentionally delayed. On the other side, the US had its own story to tell in which the plane was late getting to Los

Angeles. The reason was routine due to bad weather on the East Coast. In addition, a tire needed to be changed, food and gasoline needed to be loaded, and leftover pillows and blankets needed to be cleaned out from the aisles.

Along with an 18-person crew, 167 additional passengers boarded the aircraft as it touched down at JFK Airport. The flight crew departed the hotel in New York City at about 2330 EDT on October 30 and arrived at JFK about 40 minutes later, about the same time as the airplane, inbound from LAX, arrived at the terminal gate, according to the EgyptAir flight dispatcher who accompanied the flight crew from their hotel to the airport.

As usual in the case of Flight 990, we have two different stories. But, in this story, the reasons of the US side regarding the delay of Flight 990 sound normal. This delay may happen to any flight. The US side in this regard provided information that sounded reasonable for the delay rather than the Egyptian side. Egyptian side considered the delay as an intentional act that led to the crash.

That was all the argumentation of Egypt and the US. These argumentations are analyzed from the perspective of linguistic argumentation analysis. The researcher supports his analysis with the concept of fallacy stressing its important role in finding the truth and which of these arguments have more credibility.

In this paper, the researcher provided the views of both sides showing the importance of linguistics in analyzing data. Argument happens daily. We all argue in the streets, at work, or even at home in order to convince others of our viewpoint. But, when you argue, there must be a warrant between your claim and the data that support your claim. Argumentation is a broad science. Studying this field enables the reader to have a

good understanding and the ability to analyze the arguments of the others upon scientific methods.

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