Interviewee R

M: So, first of all, I would like you to give an introduction about yourself.

R: All right, so let’s see. My name is Ramón [last name], uhm I am 34 years old already and I am an English teacher at ‘Britanico’ here in Lima. Uhm what else can I say, well I studied communications; communications and [word missing: speaking unclearly] is known the name of the career here. Uhm what else? I guess that round it up really.

M: That’s very good. Okay, what is your general opinion about Fujimori?

R: Uuuhm, it is always a very hard question for anyone […] to give an opinion about him. Ehm I guess that that the overall opinion is that eeeh, he was not the best president we could have had. Ehm, his government, not to put everything on him right, but his government made a lot of mistakes. It *is* true that he left us in a, at least a stable […] financial stand in […] on the numbers at least. Ehm, I remember when I was growing up as a child, my earliest memories were off uhm, momentary devaluation, I mean, ehm as I child it was not something I would understand well but I saw for example how one week we had, I had like a 100 to buy, I don’t know a [yoghurt?] or a bag of bread, and then I would need a 1000 soles for the same, and then 10.000 soles for the same, and then came Allan Garcia and I was a little more conscious of things but still, I saw the Indi [name of former currency] go from dollar party let’s say to having a party of one million indi or sol per dollar, so I mean in a five year period its incredible fast for a minds, for a child’s mind to see that devaluation of money, right. And then Fujimori came, changed the currency and his currency is the one we are still using right now, it has not devaluated much in what, it’s been 20-something years since the monetary changed. Uhm, it *is* a sign right that things are stable at least on that matter, and I think that lots of people value that. We have some stability, which was missing and it gives is a sense of security, of planning forward. Ehm, that’s perhaps the most positive thing he left us but in exchange for that ehm […] there were many things that he did that were really negative, right. Ehm he pretty much kidnapped the Media. I know because I was studying communications at that time. Uhm one of the things that demotivated me from entering the market […] the working market of Media and television and stuff, was the uhm incredible control he had and I mean I am not against governments like trying to somehow uhm filter some information because you cannot really say everything, people as a mass tend to panic ehm confronted with certain things but ehm it was more like a mafia control, really I mean, journalists would simply disappear, and appear beaten up and bleeding, in critical condition uhm, one journalist would one day say something and the next day he would simply have been replaced with no questions asked and nobody cared and it was really like the public was so confused or somehow ehm into this, that because of publicity I guess or even fear of also, you know, being snatched away, those were very violent times, we grew up custom to terrorism which have been going ram bardfor 10-12 years before Fujimori actually decided to eeeh well do the cup, you know, and take control of the government, so we were all like in this sense of eeeh very quiet because you never know when you were going to disappear and even if it was another reaction, later I mean there were the marches , there were the [one word missing: name of the march?] march and even though intelligence, seemed at that time, tried to disrupt it I mean there was not like *“oh my God people are disappearing, we’re in”* I don’t know *” in some fascist government”* or something, no it didn’t happen and eventually Fujimori tried to escape, well he did escape so it was more like another reaction but because of everything we were like in this fear of reacting, fear of moving, of saying things and also I guess this stability helped to simply quieting people’s opinion, right, it was like uhm yeah you know *“he is stealing a lot of money, yeah you know there are people disappearing in the highlands”* but at least here in Lima in was like *“but you know I can run my business, I have a business salary and money is worth something so I shouldn’t complain so much”* right we grew a little complicit maybe.

M: Okay great. You did already tell me something about it, but how did you experience living here in Peru during the presidency of Fujimori? You told me about when you were a child, how you became more noticeable about it.

R: Yeah well, that was from that well all across the 90s really, so I was somewhere between 12 and 22, 24 really cause he left like the year later, uhm and in all my adolescence I pretty much saw the news, right, and on one hand, at last we would see some positive inputs about the government, I mean eeeh there was lots of publicity by the government about what they were doing and at first it all seemed fine during the first five years, everything seemed perfect, everything seemed like okay *“so we really need to do this stuff”,* you know, *“we really need to change things”*. Uhm, there was this general opinion that, uhm the political instability was starting, corrupt and everybody was very pessimistic [...] to what the policies system could achieve so when he couped, ehm there was a sense of *“finally someone is going to remedy things”*. But it was a feeling really, not so much an analysis of things. Uhm the first government was fine, everything seemed to be working well, we had stability, we started fighting uhm terrorism more effectively, ehm it’s [SL’s] leader [Abimael Gusman,] was captured and that made people even more positive about it, about Fujimori but then came […] his second government and already during the election there was talk about a fraud and about how the election had been, eh handled, eh so to produce him as the absolute winner with an absolute majority then there was talk about, eeeh militay forces , soldiers with eeeh ID documents; ID cards having voted and I guess that is where things started to go down, right, ehm the corruption became more and more obvious, it became more than you can justify by saying that *“but you know power is that, power corrupts”*, no it became pretty much too much really. Uhm, the parliament, uhm well congressmen really, were changing sides, right, and nobody at first really got a good scope of what was happening, I mean we knew that it was convenient for them to decide with the government because they had all the power but nobody knew there was money under the table until that video came out. And by then there was already a feeling of, uhm acceptances let’s say, uhm I was already at university and there was this feeling that things were going really wrong, that uhm we had to change things, uhm I remember going to a march, uhm and I remember, uhm there were people taking photos of the march who were not reporters and there was this constant fear of being watched, not perhaps so much action as we saw for well later right, uhm I mean I can’t remember exactly when uhm the bodies were discovered but then people knew about ‘La Cantuta’ and the bodies and then, uhm, the name ‘Colina’ started to appear and decided to go from mouth to mouth right, and it increased all the feeling of discomfort and the feeling of fear against the government, that we were living under a real dictatorship, something we didn’t feel under the first government, under the first government we thought it was like uhm a restructuring, we pretty much swallowed every lie that was said at the moment (laughing) but then we had this feeling of being under a real dictatorship, of being really oppressed, more than before because we saw corruption and nobody could do anything about it, we knew the things were being done to many manipulate people and it was like we had to shut op because we could simply go smoke.

M. Great. So, do you know why Fujimori is in prison? Why he was convicted?

R: I know that he’s being held responsible for everything in ‘la Cantuta’ and ‘la Colina’ group, and everything. Uhm, I’m not so sure about other charges because I know he was charged for a lot of things, I mean it was a long trial, there were, uhm the killings […] influenced trafficking, and there was, uhm theft, just pure and clean theft, so I’m not so sure which of the other charges that actually got through but I know he is there for kil…well not for killing…for being, uhm responsible for the killing these people

M: Yes. Actually, the reason why he is in prison for 25 years is also because of the corruption, the tapping on telephones, but the reason why he is there for so long is because of the two massacres he did, the ’Cantuta’ as you mentioned but also ‘Barrios Altos’.

R: Yeah, yeah I heard of that one.

M: When he and his men has been responsible for killing 25 people in total it doesn’t sounds of so much but it’s you know, it’s the whole way it happened because a lot of people think that at the universities everyone were terrorists, so that’s kindda how he verified he had to attack whole universities, and that’s why he is there [in prison].

R: What really shocks me, now that you mention it, is that ‘la Cantuta’ got really publicized but Barrios Altos not so much and Barrios Altos is here in Lima which is probably why I mean people kept quiet but it’s like next door, one of the things that happened with Peru is that here in Lima, we have the tendency to disregard what happens outside the city---it’s a very, very bad habit but you can see for example, uhm nobody was really serious about terrorism until, uhm a blew the car in [word missing: speaking unclearly] I mean before that it was kindda a joke, you know the towers? and the blackouts, the towers and the blackouts, and then people would go in strike or they would say, uhm they would send a letter to the media saying we are ordering a strike on that day, I mean uhm not working, right, on this day so nobody can work , if we see you going to work we will attack so people were like *“okay so we have an excuse not to go to work”,* it was kindda a joke really, no it wasn’t serious as it should have been until that day in Miraflores and I think that affected how we accepted the government, you know abused, we saw it in a different light cause we finally understood we were in a war and uhm somehow we got the wrong message, it was like so okay, you know, *“war require sacrifices and stuff and bla bla bla”* which is never a justification for things, but we thought that way *“okay let’s get rid of terrorism in any means possible”,* right.

M: Okay well, as I just told you Fujimori is in prison mostly because of the two massacres, because of the violations against Human Rights, 25 years. In your opinion, your personal opinion, do you think it is a fair sentence? What do you think about him being in prison?

R: I do agree that he belongs there, I mean, and releasing him is perhaps a nice political card to play for the governors but I don’t agree with it in any sense, I would rather have him rot in prison literally because what he did was monstrous really, once you learn about what really happened, once the veil falls you see what really went on, its repelling, really. I know there are people who are like *“but no, but he should get out cause he saved the country*”, he, I mean…not one man can save a country and what he did was not perhaps his originally idea, that some people gladly like to ignore to, to look away from, ehm we had a candidate who proposed pretty much the same reform on the economic point of view that Fujimori performed later. Uhm, he presented his plan but his plan was too drastic so uhm, people you know was kindda like uhm turn him, turn away from him because of that but uhm, in the end Fujimori simply applied the same plan, we sought any safe guards for people who were going to be affected, right, so it’s not like he saved the country, he didn’t do anything that wasn’t really rather obvious, right, uhm but because we are in a better condition uhm because uhm perhaps too little education and too much publicity there are people who are still convinced that he still somehow single handedly saved the country from poverty and terrorism and stuff, he didn’t and he is where he should be.

M: So, actually he is in house arrest right now and they are talking about releasing him because of his cancer. Its kindda an up and down because his doctors says that the cancer is under control. Do you think he should be released or do you think he belongs there?

 R: Under normal circumstances, right, the cancer or not, uhm he would stay in prison because of what he committed, because of his crimes to the end of his conviction or his passing away. So, no he shouldn’t be released at least from the moral uhm point of view it’s not what should happen but uhm I understand, I mean, I am already old enough to understand that it is a political card and perhaps a such, uhm in order to keep the government in order, in order to keep the parli- the congress, I keep saying the parliament because of my work you know, at ‘Britanico’ we always talk about the British parliament. Uhm, because of the, not the […] but the enormous power that Fujimori’s followers have in the congress it is better to keep that card, that possibility open because otherwise it would possibly become really ungovernable, I mean we have seen in the past, most young people don’t remember that because they don’t, they didn’t see it but for example in Garcias first government there was a lot of opposition in the congress so there was a constant uhm coming and going of law project that never really came out, that never really uhm became effective and I think that politicians as a whole understand the power that that has, so they are trying to avoid it, trying to avoid this uhm still made of things where I don’t want this but you don’t want that so we constantly fight and we don’t produce any satisfaction, right uhm. That’s why, I guess they are keeping the option open, *that* and there’s another problem about Fujimori’s eventual release, and that is that the current president has a brother in prison, right. Not for anything similar but the uhm current political situation is pretty much the same thing, it’s like in a way they both have their hostages because releasing Fujimori in a way would make uhm…[word missing: speaking unclearly] Fujimori’s political group, to be somehow committed to also support the release of [the brother of the current president] eventually, right, so its kindda like they are both holding uhm these prisoners in a political way, hostage, right, and the problem is that once they are released its like the end of a poker hand you know, okey you show your cards, you play the hand and then what, all alliances would be broken, this is what Fujimori would do and what his group has always done, *“I got what I wanted so see you, good bye”* and that’s what, that’s why the situation is so tense, probably if it wasn’t like that I guess that uhm {words missing: speaking unclearly] government would already have released him…

M: Do you think the government can gain something from keeping him in prison?

R: But from keeping him, but at the same time keeping the hope of his release alive, it’s not like *“no I don’t want to, so forget it”* no its more like *“you want it, you have to accept my terms”* and what are those terms for how long because once […] the rabbit gets out of the hat there is no way to get him back.

M: So in 2011, during the election, Fujimori’s daughter was a candidate and she said that if she was elected she would give him a pardon which means that she would free him from all charges and I know that she wasn’t elected but if you just try to think if she would have been elected and he would have been releases, what do you think would have happened?

R: It’s a very difficult question because uhm it’s not just, I mean she was not elected by the narrowest margin, that’s something to consider, I mean she, the election was almost 50/50 the thing is that it was decides by three or four per cent, which perhaps means that some 1000s of people or 10.000s of people but when you consider the whole population it’s too narrow of a margin so that means that she has an almost exact half of the country against her and against this measure so it could have made the government freaky unmanageable. I mean lets imagine that she had become president with the exact congress composition we have now, releasing her father would have pretty much let to an ungovernable country and perhaps a coup because of the ungovernability, because […] halving half the congress uhm fighting against her, fighting against every project, or any motion, or any direction that her government would tried to have, just because of this.

M: How do you think the population would have reacted? You think the terrorist would have come back into action? Because right now they are kindda into hiding.

R: Uhm, no no no, they are not into hiding because they are just, I don’t know uhm regaining their strength or measuring their time to strike. Uhm terrorism […] terrorist groups are really, really shaken right now, they are not perhaps disadvantaged but they are really shaken, they are in a really delicate position where they are pretty much surviving by business making, they have become a kind of mafia in the highlands where they offer protection in exchange of money, but they are not like gaining uhm more troops or expanding their military forces in any sense, they are just pretty much uhm the hitting arm of drug dealers, and there is no, I mean that situation won’t change in the nearfuture, anytime soon, no, so I don’t think that that would be a problem. If anything, what could happen, if we want to be really […] really, really cynical, it that perhaps we would see uhm the government producing headlines about the terrorism returning just to scare people into accepting that Fujimori has to be released in some sort of […] way to get the leader who beat them back to power. But that would be […] you know, it wouldn’t be terrorists really but let’s get some soldiers to paint some phrases and scare some people and pretend that […] reasons just to scare the population into accepting what they shouldn’t.

Michelle. Okay, great. So, in your opinion, what did the imprisonment of Fujimori meant? Like if you could just sum up of some specific things, what if it has changed something, if it hasn’t changed something , I mean what did it mean that, as I told you, a man who was democratically elected in this country he was in prison and as the first one in history. The first man ever. Did it change something?

R: Well, its, it *will* change things but eventually. It is, it will provoke a change in time. Things are changing but the thing is that uhm it’s not a change that will take place in a year or two or, it will take probably a decade or so to mature, to be right for us to understand the change but right now for example we are still uhm living the last moments of his government in many ways because uhm even though it’s been a decade, politics haven’t changed that much. Fujimori’s government meant that this banning of political parties, we haven’t recovered from that. The quality of our politicians is deterring rapidly and all though now a days it’s much harder to be corrupt in the way the government was, I mean the steal away bags of money not anymore but there are other ways of corruption and there is too much lack of preparation, of proper education, and proper uhm backgrounds in our present government, in our present congress especially, to make it really effective for all, at least corruption-free enough to […] past for a legal thing. We have congressmen in both in illegal mining, uhm in both in even drug dealing and stuff, those news pops up a lot and that’s because we are still lacking political system that you know uhm motivates really well prepared, educated politicians to enter the fray, it’s like if you got enough money you can pretty much uhm disgrace any competitors, right, into pretty much into political oblivion so not yet but things are changing as I said, it is harder to steal money now, it’s harder to hide things, now the press are walking around with their eyes much more open because they know that […] there cannot be a uhm a political strike back from the government, they can pretty much uncover everything they can find and it’s just a matter of how convenient it is for them at the moment not a matter of *“oh my God intelligence is going to change us for saying this”* so that will provoke a change but little by little. We *will* see a change but it will have to be a change in time which we will see more corrupt people being exposed more uhm, government officers prosecuted and we see uhm […] a justice system that is braver and also less corrupt and ready to prosecute people in the government at the moment. That’s something that has really uhm, I mean it has set a presence. In this country, being a congressman, a president, a vice president, doesn’t uhm free you from uhm screwing uhm either the people or justice, right, and its settling down, people are finally understanding that but little by little We have seen uhm a vice president resigning his charge because of his corruption and it wasn’t, I mean it didn’t amounted to that much, it was an improper conversation but he had to resign […] uhm and so on, so we *will* see changes but in time, we will still need some properly 10 or probably 20 more, apart from the 10 we had, to finally see the wheel totally turning.

M: So you do feel that there is a change in terms of justice, and as you said that people are being convicted for what they’ve done, the corruptions, the killings, for their abuse of Human Rights, you do see that change but as a very slow process.

R: Extremely slow process, we know for example that uhm we have just seen uhm telephone tapping uhm accusations already, already in process you know, there is a trial about to happen, to one of the […] political movements they don’t really, they are not even a political party yet, they are kindda of a movement really but they are tapping phones and attacking their competitions and okay so one of them has been spotted but it’s already one I mean, uhm in time we will see more of this corruption being xxx but it takes time, it takes such a long time really.

M: Great so, that was all of my questions. Do you have anything you would like to add to what you’ve already said; do you think something is missing?

R: If there is something missing…

M: Just if you think if there is something important to add to this theme.

R: It’s just that, I mean, it’s so big really all the situation uhm its so complex uhm and the problem, the real problem is that, the mediocre people tend to see things in a very black and white way, they are either pro or against, they are either for things, for Fujimori, for his measures, for the way he did things or they are totally against. And they are against everything, including the economically reform and everything and uhm that’s perhaps why we are having so many problems because we have a very hard time separating the circumstances, right, and the different events that happened, measuring them independently in their own way and tracing them back to where they actually started uhm for example there is this uhm […] movement on Facebook that is constantly publishing and the things they’re publishing daily or inter-daily uhm are long post about why we should be against Fujimori’s government, and again even though they are mostly right on the facts they are still being biased, too much biased to actually produce a message that will make people mediate, its either take it or leave it and that’s not the way we should do things, I mean, uhm if we are really going to learn the lesson , we need to learn to be more responsible, that’s something I don’ see yet. Very few people are learning to be political responsible, to say *“okay my political responsibility is to think about what happened, analyze it and making better choices later”.* We’re still thinking with our guts, with our bellies, with our hunger, you know, with our basic necessities, but not with our heads yet.

M: Why do you think it’s so difficult for people to see all the facts, that either they are against or for.. How is that? What is it that people are missing in order to peace the pieces together?

R: I guess education. Uhm but not like, because its not like education in terms of years […] or in terms of sheer quality, I mean there are people with very high education who are very black and white too. What we need is an education that promotes criticism that promotes critical thinking that promotes the critical understanding. We still have too much of *“learn this by the letter and repeat exactly”* kindda of education so we tend to take things in that way. It’s either accepting it or reject it, accept it or reject it. And if […] that’s the way that most of us are told to think, how can we make better choices? And that’s what missing but I guess that it, as a political decision, is something really hard because for most politicians who are in power right now, its political suicide to actually promote such uhm education because think about it: right now, the politicians are selected, how good they are at manipulating the masses at the time of election and more critical uhm population will be more, not perhaps immune, but resistance to this kind of manipulation, so that will put pretty much every current politician who’s in power, on the streets, looking for something else to do because none of them will be elected again. So that’s what missing really, how the political wheel to change that […] and well the years will decide to children to actually grow up and elect better, better people for power.

M: Great.