The research aims at studying the relations between Switzerland and European powers from the Belle Époque until the banking crisis of 1931. More precisely, it tries to examine the interaction between the economic and political dimension of these relations. Whereas the historical studies on foreign policies of big countries are extremely numerous, Swiss historiography has remained, until now, relatively poor and very fragmented. Using this historical literature and published sources, as well as Swiss and foreign unpublished archives, the research tries to provide the first general survey on the economic and political relations between Switzerland and the great powers, for the period 1891-1931.

The main objective is to understand how much the expansion of Swiss capitalism on external markets and its deep inclusion inside the European economy influenced the Confederation’s foreign policies. Can we find, for instance, a link between the internationalisation of the Swiss economy and neutrality? Are commercial and financial relations with European powers evolving in the same way as the diplomatic relations? And, considering the huge amounts of exported capital from Switzerland, had the Swiss ruling circles adopted some kinds of imperialistic policies? Moreover, we should also understand which position the Swiss economy had for foreign governments’ and economic elites’ strategies in the international sphere. Put it differently, the research tries to elaborate a true European history of Switzerland. Its scientific interest goes therefore far beyond the Swiss history.