The aim of this research is to study the war that Spain fought in Morocco at the beginning of the 20th century, called the Rif War. It is generally accepted that it was one of the key factors in the fall of the Restoration system and Primo de Rivera’s coup d’état. Spain did not suffer the horrors of WWI, but the Rif War had a comparable impact on the country. And it is undeniable that two events, the Tragic Week in Barcelona in 1909 and the Disaster of Annual (Morocco) in 1921, which Pierre Nora might call an “événement monstre”, were crucial in the final crisis of the Restorationist regime.

However, little research has been undertaken on the long term causes and social consequences of this war and its importance outside the capitals, Madrid and Barcelona.

Thus the aim of the project is to analyse the repercussions of the Rif War in Spanish society, as reflected in the press, internal government documents, and popular protest from 1905 to 1927. My goal is to assess how these campaigns affected society in a broad sense (cultural, political, and social). This research can be approached in two ways:

On the one hand, we can study the influence of colonial discourse in public opinion. This discourse was created by the state, the church, the press and the businessmen since the Disaster of 1898 (the loss of Cuba), and the mechanisms they used such as censorship, bribery, propaganda or commemorative politics.

On the other hand, we can study peoples’ reactions, either support or rejection, or even indifference, to the Rif War. For instance, labour protests, the position of socialists and the anarchists, and the strikes and demonstrations they organised against the war. One of my hypotheses is that these protests were key in the change of the behaviour of the social movements, from traditional riots to political rallies and demonstrations. Moreover, we can analyse the signs of avoiding military conscription such as flight, self-mutilation or redemption by cash.

I would like to use this research to help to clarify the causes of what Comaroff would call the “colonisation of consciousness” and identify how this discourse was totally assimilated by several sectors of Spanish society. Finally, I would like to analyse how military values, like violence, masculinity or brutalization were also assimilated by people.