Abstract

What role is being played by the constitution in authoritarian regimes? Contrary to popular belief, the available research shows that, even in authoritarian context, constitutions are not just a useless piece of paper. According to the typology by Tom Ginsburg and Albert Simpser (2014) there are four different ways how the constitutions are being treated by authoritarian leaders. The constitution may enable mutual coordination between various power centres of the regime, conceal the inner reality of the regime from the domestic audience, can do the advertising job both outwards and inwards or, finally, may be the unfulfilled vision of the regime. This master thesis examines the eventually changing role of the Iranian constitution during the two historical eras distinguished by different political approaches. The first one is the era of Muhammad Khatami's reformist rule (1997-2005), the second is the conservative era of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013). The thesis particularly focuses on the operation of two regime institutions which are crucial for the interpretation of the Iranian constitution: The Guardian Council and the Expediency Discernment Council of the System while eventually considering the decisions and statements of the Supreme Leader of Iran. By analysing the relevant documents, the author will search for an answer to the question whether and how did the approach of the regime towards the constitution change during the two eras, whether there were any differences and what role, if any, of the Ginsburg-Simpser methodology can be applied to the Iranian case.