

Abstract

This bachelor thesis is a case study which deals with the Great Charter of Liberties that was sealed by King John in 1215. Even considering the fact that the celebration of its 800th anniversary in 2015 was a grand event, it is obvious that the charter is one of the most famous constitutional documents in the world. The bachelor thesis is concerned mostly with the role this particular document plays in modern British society. Therefore, one part of the thesis focuses on academic discussion over the significance of the Great Charter today. It reveals that experts mostly talk about Magna Carta in connection to the controversial Human Rights Act of 1998 as well as the issue of potential written constitution for Great Britain. However, the main focus of this thesis is to analyse the utility of the symbol of Magna Carta in political rhetoric of four selected British prime ministers. It appears that the Great Charter is a symbol which is recently being used time and again, in addition it is remarkably variable. Not only both Labour and Conservative politicians can take advantage of it to promote contradictory political goals, furthermore it is also possible to be used in a way that in its essence goes against its original purpose. The research indicates that even though Magna Carta's actual legal significance is marginal, its symbolic value grows and it tends to be used quite frequently in political speeches, mostly in those related to the efforts to redefine British national identity.