



# **A Defense of the Constitution of Government of the United States of America (With Active Table of Contents)**

*John Adams*

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THE constitution adopted by the State of Massachusetts, in 1780, did not go into operation without meeting serious obstacles in the first few years. The hostility entertained towards an independent executive head and a double legislative department had shown itself very decidedly in the convention, and it rather gained than lost strength, from the disturbed condition of things and the distress among the people immediately after the revolution. Complaints of the aristocratic character of the senate, of the governor's salary, and of the courts, grew louder and louder until the year 1786, when they took the shape of armed resistance to the public authorities, threatening the entire overthrow of the government.

Simultaneously with this state of affairs in America, and growing out of them, discussions of the nature of government again came into vogue, both in England and France. Among other writers, Dr. Richard Price, who had all along viewed with the most lively interest the progress of the revolution, published at the close of the struggle a small tract entitled "Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the Means of making it a Benefit to the World," embodying many useful suggestions and much good advice to the people of the United States. At the close of this pamphlet he added a letter which had been addressed to him, in 1778, by the celebrated philosopher and minister of France, M. Turgot, wherein among many strictures upon the civil institutions of America, he unequivocally and roundly condemns the whole theory of government which Mr. Adams had labored to sustain. Viewing it from a French position, in which the centralization of power has, under every change of form, even the most republican, been the leading idea, he attacks the state constitutions as slavishly borrowed from the system of the mother country, and advocates the collecting of all authority in one centre as the only true substitute. The passage relating to it is prefixed to this republication of Mr. Adams's Defence, as well because it seems essential to a right understanding of the allusions constantly occurring to it in that work, as because it contains reflections upon other subjects which have not lost their interest even at this day. This letter was soon followed by a pamphlet written by the celebrated Mirabeau, reviewing the positions of Dr. Price and of M. Turgot, and particularly enforcing, in his declamatory style, the views of the latter respecting a simple and central government. These views were generally adopted by that school of philosophers which had risen into great influence at this time in France, and they were well known to be sustained by the high authority of Dr. Franklin, as well as of other distinguished men in America.

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