



# James Madison and the Virginia Resolution

*Greg Lacey*

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In response to President John Adams's Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, James Madison crafted an argument decrying the government's endeavor to expand its scope and authority. The acts attempted to limit the public's ability to scrutinize the federal government and further unbalanced efforts to find an equilibrium of power. In this essay, Madison's Virginia Resolution is examined and analyzed in the context of early American politics. It shows that, contrary to what some historians have suggested, Madison's position was not a greater threat to the nation's stability than the actual legislation he was fighting. It further contends that although Madison's arguments on the role and size of government may have shifted contextually between the time of the American Revolution and the acts, his underlying motive was consistent throughout.

*James Madison and the Virginia Resolution* gives notice to the lesser known and greatly threatened philosophy of the early Democratic-Republicans—a philosophy James Madison embodied.

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