

## Families and States in Western Europe

This collection of essays traces the relationship between families and states in the major countries of Western Europe since 1945, examining the power of states to shape family life and the capacity of families to influence states. Written by an exceptionally distinguished team of scholars, *Families and States* follows many narratives, allowing comparisons to be drawn between different countries. The essays point to numerous convergences, illustrating how states have coped with common problems arising at the level of family life, and exploring issues such as secularism, the pressure of multiculturalist demands and the growing rejection of welfare state principles. *Families and States* will be of interest to anyone analysing relations between civil society and the modern democratic state, and the place of the family within this relationship. This collection makes a significant contribution to current political theory and to our understanding of European family life in its many different forms.

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*Edited by*

Quentin Skinner



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-0-521-12801-8 — Families and States in Western Europe  
Edited by Quentin Skinner  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521762571](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521762571)

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First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Families and states in Western Europe / edited by Quentin Skinner.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76257-1 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-12801-8 (paperback)

1. Families—Europe, Western. 2. Family policy—Europe, Western.

I. Skinner, Quentin.

HQ611.F349 2011

306.85094'09045—dc22

2011006725

ISBN 978-0-521-76257-1 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-12801-8 paperback

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## Acknowledgements

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This book originated in a one-day conference held at Downing College, Cambridge, on 8 May 2008. The meeting took place under the auspices of the Cambridge Historical Society, of which I was then the President, and David Pratt the Academic Secretary. David and I worked together on the programme, which centred around Paul Ginsborg's work on the relations between family, civil society and the state in contemporary Italy. Paul opened the proceedings with a lecture on this topic, and we invited three colleagues from the Faculty of History at Cambridge to offer comments, and at the same time to contrast the Italian experience with that of some other European countries. Natalia Mora-Sitja spoke about Spain, Deborah Thom about Britain and Adam Tooze about Germany, while David Runciman supplied a theoretical framework for our day of discussion and debate.

The task of organising this occasion mainly fell upon David Pratt, and I should like to offer very warm thanks on behalf of everyone who took part for his efficiency and thoughtfulness. The cost of holding the meeting was met by the G. M. Trevelyan Fund of the Cambridge Faculty of History, to whose managers we are likewise greatly indebted. Downing College provided splendid facilities, and we owe special thanks to Jacqui Cressey, the College's Conference Services Manager. A word of appreciation is also due to the members of our audience, who raised many searching questions throughout a highly enjoyable and instructive day.

The conference proved so successful that I decided to approach Richard Fisher, Executive Director of Cambridge University Press, about the possibility of turning our proceedings into a book. Richard solicited several reports on my proposal, which were not only highly encouraging but full of good counsel about the best scholars to approach with a view to extending our coverage and producing a more systematic analysis of our theme. I was delighted when all the scholars I had been advised to contact agreed to contribute, and when all the original commentators on Paul's lecture agreed to expand their talks and bring them up to a comparable level and length. During the preparation of the resulting book everyone met their deadlines without the least fuss and agreed

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to my suggested revisions with great goodwill, for all of which I am deeply grateful.

As always, I have received exemplary help throughout from Cambridge University Press. Lucy Rhymer supervised production with the greatest care. Linda Randall acted as subeditor, bringing to bear much tact and patience as well as a wonderful eye for detail. Richard Fisher guided the project at every stage with his invariable combination of expert advice, exhilarating enthusiasm and unwavering efficiency and dispatch. My warmest thanks to everyone.

QUENTIN SKINNER