This book is the culmination of nearly ten years of work, on and off. Its publication represents an important moment in my ongoing academic and intellectual development, although the writing process feels more poignant than that because it spanned many of the most important events in my life. I have been fortunate to engage with, and learn from, some incredible academics and mentors along the way. It is fitting that, alongside the usual caveat that all errors remain my own, their input and influence is warmly acknowledged.

I owe a debt of gratitude to friends and colleagues at the Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS) at the University of Birmingham, where most of the research for the book was conducted. Peter Burnham provided invaluable support, guidance and rigorous critique throughout the research process. His intellectual influence was critical in framing the book’s core argument. Pete’s work inspired me to head to the National Archives at Kew to conduct the research for my MA dissertation, and the rest, as they say, is history. Throughout my time at POLSIS, Peter Kerr was – and indeed remains – an important mentor and sounding board. I respect him a great deal as an academic and value our catch-ups in which he always gives insightful advice with good humour.

Writing this book has helped me refine my own style as an academic. I have benefited from incredibly helpful discussions with Stephen Bates, Jim Buller, Peter Dorey, David Marsh, David Richards and Martin Smith over the years. This was especially valuable as I began to seriously re-engage with the research in challenging circumstances in March 2020. For any Early Career Researcher reading this, never underestimate how generous with their time senior academics can be – even if you’re emailing without knowing them personally. You have nothing to lose, and I for one gained a lot. My approach to the study of the politicisation–depoliticisation dynamic has come almost full circle but was undoubtedly sharpened during a productive recent collaboration with Darcy Luke, for which I am grateful. I am also appreciative to Mattias Hjort, Conor McKenna and Joseph Ward who read...
sections of the book and provided useful comments and correctives. I must also thank Rob Byron for his diligent editorial guidance, for showing faith in the book from the start and giving me the space to complete it, even if it took a little longer than planned.

Academic life is not just about teaching and publications. Navigating this career doesn’t always come easily. I have benefited from the support and camaraderie of numerous friends and colleagues over the years. In particular, Colin Thain has been a kind and supportive mentor since we reacquainted in December 2019, and I will not quickly forget the generous advice and encouragement he has given me. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work as a post-doc researcher on David Richards’s *Public Expenditure Planning and Control in Complex Times* project, alongside Diane Coyle and Martin Smith. After a lingering spell of illness scuppered my carefully planned strategy to complete the book, Dave proofread and provided comments on the bulk of the manuscript as I burned the midnight oil to cut words. His input and support made the final push more bearable and sharpened the argument. I think he tired of hearing me say ‘thank you’ at the time, but it remains important to me to state my gratitude here.

Last, but certainly not least, I must acknowledge the unwavering support of my family. My parents have unconditionally supported my studies from their directionless infancy to the PhD without questioning my choices. My parents-in-law have shown an interest in my admittedly niche academic pursuits and were an incredible help with the kids in the critical final two weeks of writing. More than anyone, though, this book would not have been possible without the love, understanding and companionship of my wife, Manu. The book’s run-in had its trying moments, coinciding with a global pandemic, moving house (twice) and the birth of our daughter. Navigating this process has been made worthwhile by Manu and our two amazing children.