Preface and acknowledgements

This book was motivated by the belief that something had fundamentally changed in the conduct of territorial mobilisation in Europe. After having studied ethno-symbolist theories of nationalism at the London School of Economics, and cost–benefit calculations of secession in Quebec at McGill University, it seemed to me that the realities of substate party mobilisation in Europe had moved beyond the literature. Nationalist parties were no longer seeking independence, framing their demands in an ethnic manner, or competing exclusively for the hearts and votes of substate electorates. Instead, regional parties of all political creeds had begun talking about exercising self-determination in a modern European construct. It appeared that state sovereignty had lost its meaning, as territorial demands bypassed the state to strike a chord in Brussels, and the notion of ‘independence’ began to be questioned in an era of interdependence and globalisation.

This book is a first attempt to explore how substate political parties responded to the new complexities of multi-level politics by using Europe to advance their territorial projects. It is the product of several years of research and multiple sojourns to some of the most fascinating yet understudied stateless nations and regions of Western Europe. Yet it would never have been written without the support and encouragement of a large number of individuals. My greatest thanks go to Michael Keating, my doctoral supervisor, who provided a continuous source of advice and inspiration throughout this research project. My interest in, and grasp of, these issues owes much to Michael’s ground-breaking works on comparative territorial politics, and his coaching that one should always try to think across several fields, subjects and disciplines when tackling complex phenomena in order to give them the considered analysis they deserve. Charlie Jeffery, as Editor of the Devolution Series as well as my postdoctoral mentor at Edinburgh University, has offered me unflinching guidance, support and countless insightful comments on this book. Also, my thanks go to Jenny Howard and Tony Mason at Manchester

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