least was projected between Louis XIV's France and Spain under Philip V".[4]

Braudel's perception that history is in turn favourable and unfavourable to vast political formations does not seem to have stimulated much enquiry among political and economic historians, perhaps because of the inherent difficulty in assessing the optimum size of a territorial unit at any given historical moment. Nor do historians of political thought seem to have accepted fully the implications of Frances Yates's insistence on the importance of Charles V's revival of the imperial idea.[5] Ideas about the sovereign territorial state remain the principal focus of attention in surveys of early modern political theory, at the expense of other traditions concerned with alternative forms of political organization subsequently regarded as anachronistic in a Europe that had turned its back on universal monarchy[6] and had subsumed its local particularisms into unitary nation states.

Of these alternative forms of political organization, one that has aroused particular interest in recent years has been the "composite state".[7] This interest certainly owes something to Europe's current preoccupation with federal or confederal union, as submerged nationalities resurface to claim their share of the sunlight.[8] But it also reflects a growing historical appreciation of the truth behind H. G. Koenigsberger's assertion that "most states in the early modern period were composite states, including more than one country under the sovereignty of one ruler". He divides these into two categories: first, composite states separated from each

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[4] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (London, 1972-3), ii, p. 660.

[5] Frances Yates, "Charles V and the Idea of the Empire", in her *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1975), p. 1.

[6] For a recent treatment of the theme of universal monarchy, see F. Bosbach, *Monarchia Universalis: Ein politischer Leitbegriff der frühen Neuzeit* (Schriftenreihe der historischen Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, xxxii, Göttingen, 1988).

[7] "Composite state" was the term used by H. G. Koenigsberger in his 1975 inaugural lecture to the chair of History at King's College London: H. G. Koenigsberger, "*Dominium Regale* or *Dominium Politicum et Regale*", in his *Politicians and Virtuosi: Essays in Early Modern History* (London, 1986). Conrad Russell, in applying the concept to British history, prefers to speak of "multiple kingdoms": see, for example, Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990), p. 27.

[8] See, for instance, the reference to contemporary European developments in the preface to Mark Greengrass (ed.), *Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1991), a collection of essays presenting case-studies of mergers, or attempted mergers, between larger and smaller political units in early modern Europe.

other by other states, or by the sea, like the Spanish Habsburg monarchy, the Hohenzollern monarchy of Brandenburg-Prussia, and England and Ireland; and, secondly, contiguous composite states, like England and Wales, Piedmont and Savoy, and Poland and Lithuania.[9]

By the period of which he is writing, some composite states, like Burgundy and the Scandinavian Union of Kalmar, had already dissolved or were on the point of dissolution, while others, like the Holy Roman Empire, were struggling for survival. On the other hand, it was Charles V's imperial successors, drawn from the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs, who were to fashion from their own inherited kingdoms and patrimonial lands a state whose composite character would stay with it to the end. While some early modern states were clearly more composite than others, the mosaic of *pays d'élections* and *pays d'états* in Valois and Bourbon France is a reminder of a historic process which was to be repeated once again when Louis XIII formally united the principality of Béarn to France in 1620.[10] A state that was still essentially composite in character was only adding one further component to those already in place.

If sixteenth-century Europe was a Europe of composite states, coexisting with a myriad of smaller territorial and jurisdictional units jealously guarding their independent status, its history needs to be assessed from this standpoint rather than from that of the society of unitary nation states that it was later to become. It is easy enough to assume that the composite state of the early modern period was no more than a necessary but rather unsatisfactory way-station on the road that led to unitary statehood; but it should not automatically be taken for granted that at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this was already the destined end of the road.

The creation in medieval western Europe of a number of large political units — France, England, Castile — which had succeeded in building up and maintaining a relatively strong administrative apparatus, and had at once drawn strength from, and fostered, some sense of collective identity, certainly pointed strongly in a unitary direction. But dynastic ambition, deriving from the deeply-rooted European sense of family and patrimony, cut across

[9] Koenigsberger, "*Dominium Regale* or *Dominium Politicum et Regale*", p. 12.
[10] For a succinct recent account of the events of 1620, see Christian Desplat, "Louis XIII and the Union of Béarn to France", in Greengrass (ed.), *Conquest and Coalescence*.