

# Lessons from Singapore

While David Cameron's cabinet reshuffle has resulted a a foreign secretary who is somewhat more eurosceptic than his predecessor, it is still very unlikely that, in the event of a Conservative victory in next year's General Election, the Prime Minister will advocate withdrawal from the EU in any referendum. No doubt any minor concessions will be touted as a major victory and we will be encouraged to vote to stay in.

But supposed we don't?

The history of a nation which reluctantly gained independence from a federation almost 50 years ago offers us great encouragement. Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Its leaders felt at the time that the historical and economic ties between Singapore and the former British colony of Malaya were too strong for them to continue as separate nations. They had campaigned vigorously for a merger, but having achieved their goal, the union only lasted two years. Following tensions between Singapore and the other Malay states over economic issues and violent clashes between ethnic Malays and ethnic Chinese in Singapore itself, Singapore was expelled from the Malaysian Federation in 1965. Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew was devastated. "For me, it is a moment of anguish", he said. "All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and unity of the two territories." However, since 1965 Singapore has never looked back. It has comprehensively out-performed Malaysia, with an economy which has grown by an average of 9% per annum. By 1990, it had become the second wealthiest nation in Asia after Japan.

If tiny Singapore can not only survive as an independent nation but out-perform its larger neighbour, surely the UK, which is one of the world's ten largest economies, is well-equipped to do likewise.