

At 4.30am it is apparent that something quite extraordinary has happened in the general election.

I recognise the reality that the Tories have won 44 per cent of the UK popular vote.

It is clear that the SNP has had a bad night in Scotland but overall won the election north of the border.

But against all expectation Jeremy Corbyn has to be seen as the biggest winner in this election. Labour's result is excellent, with wins in many parts of the country, including in Scotland.

What seems very likely is that Theresa May's gamble has failed very badly indeed. She may lead the largest party but she will not have a majority. With DUP support she may just be able to govern with maybe an effective 328 seats under her effective control. That is important to remember: with Sinn Fein not taking their seats it seems likely that no Progressive Alliance could rule with any confidence.

What does this mean? First, it means that the political momentum is with Labour. Only they will go to the Commons confident with their result.

Second, May's future has to be in doubt, although who might want to succeed her or could plausibly do so (with Boris Johnson an impossibility because of his unacceptability to Europe) is open to question. Rudd may not have a seat; Davis is surely not realistic. Is Philip Hammond the safe pair of hands? Osborne must regret not being there.

Third, I cannot see Labour trying to form a government. The maths makes that look like an impossibility.

Fourth, Brexit negotiations are bound to be in turmoil. It would seem nigh on impossible for meaningful negotiation to take place. But will the EU agree to put anything in hold? The law does not allow it and Article 50 has been triggered. Is the biggest question of all whether it should be withdrawn now?

And does that mean another election is very likely as soon as October to determine just

what should happen in the Brexit negotiations? How else can this be resolved?

And if that were to happen is it plausible that the Tories could bounce back?

I have no answers as yet this morning. But the fact that the Tories have had such a bad night is very good news for this country which desperately needed an end to the disastrous rule of the Conservative party.