Part C, Q9: Do the results of the 2011 federal election suggest that Canada is entering a new party system?

It could be.

Party system definition: # of parties and the dominant cleavages between the parties, and length of time that it lasts – lasts at least 2 general elections (15-20 years). Brief history of the party system (Carty, Cross and Young, 2000)

1st party system – from 1867-1920, characterized by two major parties, engaged in national competition

2nd party system – from 1920-1960, characterized by regional politics – CCF and Social Credit – difficult to hold government to account

3rd party system – from 1960-1993 – had NDP emerge as party of the working class, some regionalism, brokerage politics, national messaging, new tools (opinion poling, tv)

4th party system – emerged from the 1993 election, was characterized by: regionalism (breaking up brokerage politics), direct democracy, diversity of parties, fragmentation of the electorate, and 2 new parties

5th party system – decline of regional parties again, HOC dominated by a party of the right and a party of the left (the centrist party has significantly declined), may be ripe for intrusion of Duverger’s law (Gaines, 1999)

This new party system is engaged in a different form of regionalism – Conservatives from Ontario westward, while NDP Ontario eastward

A few things would have to solidify to suggest the emergence of a new party system – maintenance of NDP role as opposition, or as a major party through election into minority or majority government in the near-ish future, continued decline or maintenance of low-seat count for BQ and Liberals

* Why might liberals/BQ remain in decline –
* Nadeau et al., 2001, NDP the party of social policy, Liberal party national unity, Conservatives party of crime and the economy – with sovereignty off the table (explaining BQ decline) national unity also off the table as a major national concern

Could see this happen through the incremental move of the NDP and Conservatives into a cartel party – acting together (as once the Liberals and Conservatives did to integrate themselves more closely with the state through state subsidies (MacIvor, 1996)), and the reinforcement of Duverger’s Law (Gaines, 1999)

* Though Libs/Cons never together formed a Cartel party (MacIvor, 1996; Young, 1998), Cons/NDP may be in a better position to do so

Like the 4th party system, the new party system has a reduced role (Mendelsohn and Meisel, 2001), no longer really participates in the following activities:

* Integrating and mobilizing citizens by providing link between state and society
* Setting the policy agenda
* Organizing public opinion
* Aggregation of interests

This is due to the rise of the bureaucratic state, expansion of quasi-judicial bodies, courts and the charter, changing fed-prov relations, rise of the PMO, and decline of the MP/patronage