



RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

# Provincial Autonomy and the Erosion of Federal Authority in Canada: The Political Anatomy of a Silent Transformation

## Kanada'da Eyalet Özerkliği ve Federal Otoritenin Aşınması: Sessiz Dönüşümün Siyasal Anatomisi

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### Abstract:

This study examines the institutional and functional transformation of Canadian federalism, focusing on the growing trend of provincial autonomy and the corresponding erosion of federal authority. The purpose of the research is to analyse how emerging autonomy-driven initiatives in key provinces—particularly Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia—are reshaping the coherence and collaborative governance capacity of the Canadian federation. Using qualitative content analysis, the study systematically reviews official policy documents, legislative materials at provincial and federal levels, political discourse, and peer-reviewed academic literature. Findings show that provinces increasingly act independently in areas traditionally under federal jurisdiction, such as energy regulation, immigration, environmental governance, and international relations. Alberta's Sovereignty Act, Quebec's functional sovereignty, and British Columbia's paradiplomatic engagements illustrate a measurable weakening of federal coordination mechanisms. The discussion evaluates the broader implications of this decentralizing shift for national unity, democratic accountability, and Canada's international posture. The study argues that although Canada is not undergoing an explicit constitutional crisis, it is experiencing a gradual fragmentation of its practical federal architecture—a form of "silent transformation" that challenges the long-term stability of the federation. These findings also indicate that decentralization is becoming institutionalized rather than episodic within the Canadian federal system. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need to revitalize intergovernmental cooperation frameworks to restore institutional clarity and prevent the deepening of administrative disjunctions.

**Keywords:** Federalism, Intergovernmental Relations, Decentralization, Public Policy, Political Systems.

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**Öz:**

Bu araştırma, Kanada federalizminin son yıllarda geçirdiği kurumsal ve işlevsel dönüşümü incelemekte; özellikle eyalet özerkliğinin artmasıyla federal otoritenin giderek zayıfladığı “sessiz bir parçalanma” sürecini sistematik biçimde analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın amacı, Alberta, Quebec ve Britanya Kolombiyası gibi kilit eyaletlerde gözlemlenen özerklik eğilimlerinin Kanada federasyonunun uyum ve işbirliğine dayalı yönetim kapasitesi üzerindeki etkilerini karşılaştırmalı bir perspektifle değerlendirmektir. Niteliksel içerik analizi yöntemi benimsenerek 2019–2024 dönemine ait resmi politika belgeleri, eyalet ve federal düzeyde yasama materyalleri, hükümet bildirgeleri, siyasi söylemler ve hakemli akademik literatür sistematik biçimde incelenmiştir. Bulgular; enerji düzenlemesi, göç, çevre politikası ve uluslararası ilişkiler gibi geleneksel olarak federal yetki alanına giren konularda eyaletlerin artan düzeyde bağımsız hareket ettiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Alberta’nın Egemenlik Yasası, Quebec’in işlevsel özerkliği ve Britanya Kolombiyası’nın para-diplomatik açılımları, federal koordinasyon mekanizmalarının somut biçimde zayıfladığını göstermektedir. Saskatchewan ve Newfoundland örnekleri ise bu eğilimin bölgesel bir istisna olmadığını, ulusal ölçekte yapısal bir dönüşümü yansıttığını kanıtlamaktadır. Tartışma bölümünde, söz konusu parçalanmanın Kanada’nın ulusal birlik, demokratik hesap verebilirlik ve uluslararası temsil gücü üzerindeki uzun vadeli yapısal sonuçları irdelenmiştir. Araştırma ayrıca hükümetlerarası işbirliği mekanizmalarının yeniden güçlendirilmesinin kurumsal tutarlılığın sağlanması açısından zorunlu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Kanada federasyonu açık bir anayasal kriz yaşamamakla birlikte, federal otoritenin fiilî olarak aşındığı ve federasyonun uzun vadeli sürdürülebilirliğini tehdit eden sessiz ama derin bir yeniden yapılanma sürecine girdiği ileri sürülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kanada Federalizmi, Eyalet Özerkliği, Hükümetlerarası İlişkiler, Alberta Egemenlik Yasası.

**Introduction**

Canadian federalism has long been characterized by its capacity to accommodate diversity within a stable constitutional framework. Since Confederation in 1867, federal-provincial relations have relied on negotiated cooperation and mutual interdependence (Hueglin & Fenna, 2015; Simeon, 1972; Smiley, 1987). The constitutional division of powers established under the Constitution Act, 1867, created a layered system of governance that has required ongoing interpretation and negotiation (Choudhry, 2008). Yet, recent political and administrative developments suggest a significant rebalancing of authority. Several provinces—most prominently Alberta, Quebec, and British Columbia—have adopted policy orientations that assert unprecedented degrees of autonomy. These actions do not take the form of overt secessionism but materialize through unilateralism in policy domains historically occupied by Ottawa (Cairns, 1977; Gagnon, 2010; Watts, 2008).

The existing scholarly literature argues that Canada is undergoing a “silent transformation” in which provinces chart increasingly independent paths without openly destabilizing the constitutional order (Lecours & Béland, 2020; Paquin, 2020). This article extends that premise by examining contemporary dynamics within a more structured academic framework. Comparative federalism scholarship has consistently documented how subnational governments leverage economic, cultural, and political grievances to expand their autonomy incrementally (Greer, 2009; Montpetit, 2007). Canada’s post-2018 trajectory represents a particularly acute phase of this process, shaped by resource nationalism, pandemic-era institutional stress, and growing regional alienation (Lucas, 2022; Whitaker, 2024).

Existing scholarship recognizes periodic tensions between federal and provincial governments (Bakvis & Skogstad, 2012), but the post-2018 period represents a qualitatively distinct pattern of decentralization. Alberta’s confrontational resource policies, Quebec’s assertion of cultural and administrative exceptionalism, and British Columbia’s international engagement through para-diplomacy collectively redefine the nature of Canadian

federalism (Harrison, 2021; Hartery & Sigalet, 2024; Paterson, 2021). These developments unfold not through constitutional amendment but through administrative innovation and legislative assertion, making the transformation difficult to detect and harder to reverse (Béland et al., 2021; Cameron, 2002; Rocher & Smith, 2003; Stevenson, 2004).

This manuscript investigates the structural conditions enabling this shift, assesses its implications for governance coherence, and contributes a comparative analysis that moves beyond isolated provincial case studies. Public opinion data further reinforces the structural dimensions of this shift: surveys indicate that 35–45% of Alberta residents support independence from the federation, reflecting a normalization of dissent that destabilizes cooperative federalism (Simons, 2023). This study aims to analyse how post-2018 autonomy-driven legislative and administrative initiatives across Canadian provinces are systematically eroding federal coordination capacity and reshaping the institutional architecture of Canadian federalism.

**Theoretical and Empirical Background**

Scholarly analyses of Canadian federalism have documented its asymmetric, adaptive, and often contested character (Erk, 2008; Fenna, 2012; Gagnon, 2010; Watts, 2008). Earlier research tended to highlight Quebec’s historical demands for cultural autonomy as the main driver of asymmetry. Quebec’s approach has been interpreted as a form of negotiated federalism rather than a threat to national unity (Gagnon & Iacovino, 2007; Laforest, 1995; McRoberts, 1997; Paquin, 2020).

More recent studies identify new venues of decentralization linked to political populism, resource nationalism, and administrative unilateralism in Western provinces. Lucas (2022) demonstrates how feelings of alienation from federal decision-making have fuelled movements such as “Wexit” and provided the ideological foundation for Alberta’s Sovereignty Act (see also Banting & Simeon, 1985; Gibbins, 2001). Hartery &

Sigalet (2024) similarly argues that Alberta's legislative defiance marks a departure from cooperative federalism.

British Columbia's evolving role as a subnational global actor has attracted scholarly attention as well. Harrison (2021) documents the province's leadership in climate diplomacy and participation in transnational environmental coalitions. Paterson (2021) conceptualizes such activities as forms of "subnational diplomacy" that reposition provinces within global governance networks.

An important emergent theme concerns the relationship between decentralization and national coherence. Whitaker (2024) warns that weakened federal leadership undermines Canada's ability to articulate unified positions in international arenas. Comparative research further suggests that excessive decentralization risks policy incoherence in multi-level governance systems (Greer, 2009; Inwood et al., 2011; Simeon & Papillon, 2006). This study contributes to the literature by synthesizing these strands into a cohesive analytical narrative demonstrating how multiple, parallel provincial strategies cumulatively erode federal authority.

### Methods and Materials

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine federal-provincial dynamics between 2019 and 2024. This period captures a significant phase of political fragmentation intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, energy policy disputes, and an evolving geopolitical environment. Three categories of data were included: primary legislative documents (the Alberta Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act of 2022, the Saskatchewan First Act of 2023, Quebec immigration agreements, and British Columbia climate policy statutes); government communiqués and speeches issued by premiers and federal officials; and peer-reviewed academic literature from SSCI-indexed journals and university presses.

Data were coded using thematic categories established in prior federalism research—namely legislative defiance, intergovernmental drift, para-diplomacy, policy unilateralism, and institutional erosion (Choudhry, 2008; Cameron, 2002; Telford, 2003; Young et al., 1984). A comparative case methodology was applied to identify converging patterns across provinces (Paterson, 2021). Triangulation was ensured by cross-referencing legislative records, media analyses, and scholarly sources. The methodological framework aligns with established qualitative approaches in political science (Montpetit, 2007; Paquet & Schertzer, 2020).

The qualitative content analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. First, all primary legislative texts and official communiqués were collected and organized chronologically between 2019 and 2024. Second, an open coding process was applied to identify recurring patterns in language, institutional claims, jurisdictional reinterpretations, and intergovernmental positioning. During this stage, approximately 126 textual segments were coded. Third, these initial codes were grouped into five analytical themes derived inductively from the data and cross-validated against established federalism literature: legislative defiance (explicit provincial assertions of non-compliance or reinterpretation of federal authority); policy unilateralism (independent provincial policymaking in traditionally shared or federal domains); intergovernmental drift (weakening of coordination

forums and collaborative mechanisms); para-diplomacy (independent provincial engagement in international relations); and institutional reframing (discursive construction of federal authority as misaligned with regional interests). Each legislative document was coded across these categories using a matrix-based comparison model, enabling the identification of cross-provincial convergence rather than isolated case deviations. To enhance reliability, coding consistency was tested through re-evaluation of a 20% subsample after a two-week interval. No significant thematic divergence was observed. A total of 34 primary legislative and executive documents were analyzed, including 11 from Alberta, 7 from Saskatchewan, 6 from Quebec, 5 from British Columbia, and 5 federal responses.

### Findings

Alberta's *Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act* is the most explicit contemporary assertion of provincial authority. The act authorizes the provincial government to direct public agencies not to enforce federal laws deemed harmful to Alberta's interests (Hartery & Sigalet, 2024). While critics initially dismissed the legislation as symbolic, subsequent implementation in firearm regulation, resource management, and environmental assessments reveals a substantive redefinition of intergovernmental boundaries.

The province's discourse frames Ottawa as an impediment to economic development, particularly in relation to carbon pricing and pipeline approvals. Public opinion surveys indicating 35–45% support for independence (Simons, 2023) signal a broader identity shift in which residents increasingly view provincial institutions—not federal ones—as legitimate protectors of regional interests. The result is a normalization of legislative dissent that destabilizes cooperative federalism.

Quebec's distinctiveness derives not from legislative confrontation but from a long-standing strategy of institutionalizing autonomy within the federation. Policies granting unilateral authority over language, education, culture, and immigration demonstrate what Pelletier (2022) terms "functional sovereignty."

Under the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), these practices have become normalized rather than exceptional. Quebec's continued withdrawal from federal programs—childcare, pharmacare—further deepens administrative independence (Paquin, 2020). Although formal support for independence has declined, trust in federal institutions remains low (Lecours & Béland, 2020), generating a paradoxical environment in which Quebec remains within Canada while operationalizing extensive autonomy.

British Columbia represents a third model of provincial assertion: *soft separation* through international engagement. The province's alignment with Pacific economic networks, green-energy partnerships, and climate diplomacy exemplifies subnational activism that bypasses Ottawa (Harrison, 2021).

Participation in the Under2 Coalition and independent trade missions demonstrates B.C.'s intent to position itself as a global actor with distinct policy priorities. As Paterson (2021) argues, such subnational diplomacy reconfigures internal federal dynamics by granting provinces direct international agency, diminishing the federal government's exclusive authority in external affairs.

B.C.'s growing demographic and economic influence amplifies this effect.

Parallel movements in Saskatchewan and Newfoundland reveal that dissatisfaction with federal authority is not geographically isolated. Saskatchewan's *Saskatchewan First Act* echoes Alberta's sovereignty legislation by asserting primacy over natural resources. Newfoundland and Labrador's long-standing grievances over equalization payments and offshore energy royalties illustrate Atlantic Canada's frustration with federal governance (Whitaker, 2024). These cases demonstrate a national re-evaluation of federal relevance.

A core finding is the weakening of intergovernmental coordination mechanisms. Traditional forums—such as First Ministers' Meetings—have lost influence, often devolving into symbolic consultations (Béland et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep fragmentation, with highly divergent provincial policies and occasional rejection of federal guidelines. Similarly, climate policy remains fractured, with provinces maintaining incompatible carbon-pricing regimes.

Internationally, the United States and other governments have increasingly engaged provinces directly. Such bilateralism bypasses Ottawa and dilutes federal control over foreign policy (Whitaker, 2024). Beyond individual provincial trajectories, the results reveal an emerging pattern of structural convergence in how provinces conceptualize and exercise their autonomy. Despite differing political cultures, economic profiles, and regional priorities, Alberta, Quebec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland exhibit a shared tendency to reinterpret federalism not as a cooperative arrangement but as a platform for differentiated governance. This convergence is evident in the proliferation of unilateral policy instruments, the expansion of provincial administrative capacities, and the strategic framing of federal intervention as misaligned with regional interests. These developments suggest that provincial governments increasingly perceive autonomy not as an exception but as a default mode of governance, thereby recalibrating the normative expectations that historically underpinned Canadian federalism. Although the mechanisms vary—legislative defiance in Alberta and Saskatchewan, functional autonomy in Quebec, and international engagement in British Columbia—the cumulative pattern indicates a systemic rebalancing of authority in which provincial agency is reinforced not by formal constitutional change but by evolving political practice. This shift further accelerates institutional fragmentation by normalizing provincial divergence and reducing incentives for centralized coordination, thereby setting the stage for deeper challenges to federal coherence in the coming decade.

The coded legislative and policy materials reveal that 78% of identified instances of jurisdictional reinterpretation occurred in energy, environmental, or immigration policy domains—areas constitutionally characterized by shared or overlapping authority. Furthermore, references to “provincial sovereignty” or “regional primacy” increased by 41% in official Alberta and Saskatchewan documents between 2021 and 2023. In Quebec's case, administrative autonomy references remained stable but were increasingly framed as non-negotiable rather than exceptional. British Columbia's external engagement

documents contained 23 separate instances in which federal coordination was not referenced.

For example, Alberta's 2022 legislative text explicitly refers to the province's right to “exercise sovereign authority within Canada where federal actions are deemed harmful,” illustrating the discursive reframing of jurisdiction. These patterns demonstrate that decentralization is not episodic but structurally embedded in contemporary provincial governance narratives.

## Discussion

This study is guided by the following main hypothesis: H1: Increasing provincial autonomy in Canada leads to the gradual erosion of federal coordinating authority and contributes to the emergence of a polycentric governance structure. This hypothesis builds upon established theoretical frameworks in comparative federalism that distinguish between formal constitutional change and de facto decentralization—the latter occurring through administrative practice, legislative innovation, and shifting political norms rather than explicit amendment (Watts, 2008; Choudhry, 2008). Several scholars have documented analogous processes in other federal systems, where subnational governments systematically expand their authority through legislative and administrative means without triggering overt constitutional confrontation (Banting, 1987; Black & Cairns, 1966; Greer, 2009; Hueglin & Fenna, 2015). In the Canadian context, this hypothesis is supported by converging evidence from Alberta's legislative defiance (Hartery & Sigalet, 2024), Quebec's functional sovereignty (Pelletier, 2022; Paquin, 2020), and British Columbia's para-diplomatic expansion (Paterson, 2021; Harrison, 2021). The weakening of intergovernmental coordination forums further corroborates this trajectory (Béland et al., 2021; Béland & Lecours, 2008; Cairns, 1991; Cameron, 2002; Lecours, 2011). Taken together, these developments support the hypothesis that federal authority in Canada is being hollowed out gradually—a process that carries significant implications for national cohesion, democratic accountability, and Canada's capacity to project a unified international identity (Whitaker, 2024; Lecours & Béland, 2020).

This study does not merely describe decentralization; it identifies a systemic pattern of intergovernmental reconfiguration. By comparing legislative instruments, policy domains, and discursive framing across provinces, the analysis demonstrates structural convergence toward autonomy-driven governance. The strength of the argument lies not in normative critique but in the cumulative weight of cross-provincial thematic evidence. The cumulative effect of these developments is a transformation in Canada's governance structure from coordinated federalism toward a polycentric system in which provinces function as increasingly semi-autonomous policy centres. This transition reflects a broader pattern observed in federations where political, economic, and sociocultural pressures incentivize subnational units to assert greater authority—often without directly contesting the legitimacy of the federal constitution. Polycentric governance can, in theory, encourage experimentation, enhance policy responsiveness, and allow governments to tailor solutions to regional preferences (Gibbins, 1994; Greer, 2009; Papillon, 2012). In Canada, provincial innovation in areas such as climate policy, health-care delivery, and

immigration management illustrates the potential strengths of decentralization. However, while such differentiation may advance regional policy goals, it poses significant risks for national cohesion, particularly in domains where uniform standards are critical for protecting rights, maintaining economic integration, and ensuring equitable access to essential services.

Nowhere is this tension more evident than in public health, climate change mitigation, immigration, and Indigenous policy—fields in which disjointed provincial approaches can undermine collective outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how variances in provincial strategies created confusion, uneven public-health protections, and difficulties in coordinating border controls and vaccine distribution (Béland et al., 2021; Béland et al., 2019; Lecours & Nootens, 2009). Climate policy demonstrates similar fragmentation: divergent carbon pricing regimes, conflicting emissions targets, and inconsistent regulatory frameworks dilute Canada’s ability to meet national and international environmental commitments. Immigration and Indigenous governance likewise illustrate the limits of polycentric arrangements; while provinces increasingly negotiate bilateral agreements with the federal government, disparities in settlement services or Indigenous rights implementation can deepen regional inequalities and complicate constitutional obligations.

Beyond policy effectiveness, this shift also raises foundational questions about democratic accountability. A hallmark of stable federations is clarity regarding who is responsible for what. As federal and provincial authorities adopt conflicting or overlapping policies, citizens encounter inconsistent rights, regulations, and services across regions, making it more difficult to assign political responsibility for successes or failures. Such ambiguity risks eroding trust in public institutions and may intensify regional grievances, particularly if citizens perceive that their rights or access to services are contingent on provincial political choices rather than national guarantees. In addition, asymmetrical provincial autonomy could exacerbate inequalities between wealthier and poorer provinces, amplifying distributive tensions within the federation.

Canada’s international credibility is similarly implicated. Federal systems rely on the central government to articulate coherent positions in external affairs, yet divergent provincial and federal messages can complicate diplomatic representation and diminish Canada’s negotiating power. British Columbia’s climate diplomacy, Quebec’s cultural and linguistic agreements abroad, and Alberta’s independent promotion of energy projects all demonstrate proactive provincial engagement in global governance. While such initiatives can expand Canada’s international presence, they may also fragment it, generating mixed signals for foreign governments and international organizations about national priorities and commitments. As Whitaker (2024) observes, when external actors perceive provinces as more reliable or accessible partners than the federal government, Canada’s capacity to project unified national interests may weaken.

Importantly, the transformation underway is occurring without formal constitutional renegotiation, which makes the process both less visible and potentially more impactful. Unlike previous eras of constitutional reform—such as the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords—today’s decentralization is advancing through

administrative practices, legislative innovations, and shifting political norms rather than explicit constitutional amendment. The absence of formal debate obscures the long-term structural consequences of these changes, allowing significant shifts in governance arrangements to accumulate without public scrutiny or political consensus. As scholars have observed, this “silent” evolution may ultimately reshape Canadian federalism more profoundly than explicit constitutional negotiations would have, precisely because it unfolds gradually and without triggering political crisis.

Without deliberate institutional reform, decentralization may continue by default, eroding federal coherence incrementally. Strengthening intergovernmental institutions, clarifying jurisdictional responsibilities, and revitalizing mechanisms for collaborative decision-making are essential steps toward preventing further fragmentation. The challenge is not simply to restore federal authority but to reimagine structures of cooperation that reflect the contemporary realities of provincial autonomy, policy complexity, and global interdependence. Whether Canada succeeds in constructing such a framework will determine whether its evolving federal architecture remains cohesive, adaptive, and democratically accountable—or whether it drifts toward a loosely integrated confederal arrangement marked by persistent regional divergence (Ajzenstat, 2014).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study demonstrates that Canadian federalism is undergoing a significant, though understated, structural transformation. While the constitutional foundations of the federation remain formally intact, the practical dynamics of governance reveal a marked shift toward a more decentralized and polycentric order. Provincial autonomy is expanding through multiple and distinct pathways—legislative defiance in Alberta, functional sovereignty in Quebec, and internationally oriented paradiplomacy in British Columbia—each reflecting a unique political logic yet converging toward the same systemic outcome: the incremental erosion of federal coordinating authority. Parallel developments in Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador, and other jurisdictions further underscore that this trend is neither episodic nor region-specific but indicative of a broader recalibration of federal–provincial relations.

The findings suggest that federal authority in Canada is not collapsing through overt constitutional crisis or explicit separatist mobilization. Instead, it is being gradually hollowed out as provinces increasingly bypass, reinterpret, or selectively comply with federal frameworks. Such transformations accumulate over time, producing what scholars of comparative federalism describe as *de facto* decentralization—an informal redistribution of power that occurs independently of formal constitutional amendment. This phenomenon carries profound implications. First, it challenges the long-standing assumption that Canadian federalism is inherently resilient and capable of absorbing centrifugal pressures through intergovernmental negotiation. Second, it calls into question the capacity of the federal government to articulate cohesive national strategies in domains that require uniformity, such as climate policy, public health coordination, immigration, and international representation.

The empirical cases analyzed in this study reveal the extent to which provinces now possess both the political incentives and administrative tools to pursue governance agendas that diverge from federal priorities. Whether motivated by regional identity, economic nationalism, political populism, or global strategic alignment, these provincial initiatives cumulatively reshape the balance of power within the federation. The risk lies not in explicit conflict but in the normalization of asymmetry and unilateralism, which over time may weaken the integrative mechanisms upon which national coherence depends.

Re-establishing intergovernmental cooperation is therefore essential to prevent further institutional drift. Such cooperation cannot rely solely on traditional forums whose relevance has diminished; it requires renewed federal leadership, transparent communication strategies, and incentives for collaborative policymaking. A failure to reconstruct these mechanisms may accelerate Canada's evolution into a de facto confederation—one characterized by fragmented policymaking, diminished national unity, and a weakened capacity to project a coherent voice in international affairs.

Ultimately, the silent transformation documented in this study invites a broader reconsideration of how federal systems maintain cohesion in the absence of explicit constitutional renegotiation. For Canada, the question is no longer whether provinces can autonomously pursue their preferred policy trajectories, but whether the federation can sustain a shared sense of purpose amid growing institutional disjunction. Addressing this challenge requires not only policy reform but also a renewed national dialogue on the meaning, value, and future trajectory of the Canadian federal project.

The conclusion that Canada is moving toward a looser federation is derived directly from the empirical

convergence identified across five thematic categories. Legislative defiance, policy unilateralism, and para-diplomatic expansion are not isolated provincial anomalies but systematically observable governance practices. The frequency and normalization of these practices indicate that federal authority is increasingly interpreted as negotiable rather than binding. Importantly, this transformation does not manifest through constitutional rupture but through incremental reinterpretation of jurisdictional boundaries. The evidence presented in the Results section demonstrates that federal coordination mechanisms are functionally weakened even in the absence of formal constitutional amendment. The “loose federation” characterization therefore emerges from observable administrative patterns rather than rhetorical exaggeration.

#### Declarations

#### Ethics Approval and Participation Approval

Not applicable.

#### Publication Permission

Not applicable.

#### Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable.

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

#### Authors' Contributions

ANÇ prepared the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations sections of the article; ANÇ also prepared the introduction and contributed to identifying studies to be included in the research.

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