Our paper relates to constitutional compliance, focusing on the so-called *de jure–de facto* gaps, defined as "non-congruence between provisions explicitly written down in the document called the constitution and the behavior of the top representatives of the various government branches such as cabinet members, legislators, and members of the country's top court(s)" (Voigt 2021). The literature identifies three main groups of determinants of constitutional compliance: (1) design factors, such as constitutional provisions that envisage sanctions for violations (Gutmann et al. 2023); (2) environmental factors, including cultural background, political conflict, and socio-economic characteristics (Law & Versteeg 2013; Gutmann et al. 2023; Lewkowicz et al. 2023); and (3) non-state actors, particularly citizens, who may constrain government behavior (Lewkowicz & Lewczuk 2023; Kantorowicz & Metelska-Szaniawska 2023).

We extend this literature by investigating the potential spatial diffusion of constitutional compliance and its relationship with economic development. Specifically, we ask whether spatial waves of constitutional compliance can be identified among countries grouped by geographic proximity, income level, or political regime.

To address this question, we estimate a spatial panel econometric model for a sample of 122 countries covering the period 1995–2023 (preliminary specification: SAC model):

$$\begin{aligned} constitutional\ compliance_{it} \\ &= \rho W constitutional\ compliance_{it} + \beta_1 democracy_{it} + \beta_2 low\ income_{it} \\ &+ \beta_3 middle\ income_{it} + \beta_4 W constitutional\ compliance_{it} * democracy_{it} \\ &+ \beta_5 W spatial\ lag\ of constitutional\ compliance_{it} * low\ income_{it} \\ &+ \beta_6 W spatial\ lag\ of constitutional\ compliance_{it} * middle\ income_{it} + \beta_7 X_{it} \\ &+ u_{it} \end{aligned}$$

$$u_{it} = \lambda W u_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where:

- *W* is either inverse squared distance or cultural distance matrix (currently based on Eff 2008),
- *democracy* is a binary variable indicating whether country is a democracy (Bjørnskov & Rode 2020),
- *low income* is a binary variable indicating whether a given country belongs to a low income group as defined by the World Bank (2024 Atlas GNI per capita ≤ $1,135),
- *middle income* is a binary variable indicating whether a given country belongs to a middle income group as defined by the World Bank (2024 Atlas GNI per capita between $1,136 and $13,935),
- X_{it} represents one of the following control variables: leader characteristics, civil society participation, polarization of society, fractionalization of government and opposition, regime type, length of constitution.

Preliminary results indicate a statistically significant and positive spatial spillover of constitutional compliance across countries. The magnitude of this effect is stronger in non-democratic states and in low- and middle-income countries. These findings are robust across alternative spatial matrices and model specifications.

Overall, the results suggest that constitutional compliance is not solely a domestic phenomenon but also exhibits meaningful spatial interdependence.