The social embeddedness of elections: Ghana's 2016 and 2020 campaigns

George M. Bob-Milliar and Jeffrey W. Paller

Working Paper
No. 60 2022

Governance and Local Development Institute

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

The Social Embeddedness of Elections: Ghana's 2016 and 2020 Campaigns

George M. Bob-Milliar
KNUST
gbobmilliar.cass@knust.edu.gh

Jeffrey W. Paller,
University of San Francisco and University of Gothenburg
Jeffrey.paller@gu.se

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Enoch Osei Koduah, Fidelis Kwadwo Nketia, Sylvester Andam, Yvonne Ilupeju, Juliet Oware and Precious Boateng for their excellent research assistance. Nicholas Dorward provided fantastic data analysis and visualizations. We received helpful feedback at the Political Parties in Africa conference on January 2021 and the Workshop on Election Campaign Rallies in Africa in May 2021. The authors would also like to thank Rose Shaber-Twedt for her editorial assistance and Sara Bjurenvall for her publication assistance.

Abstract

Research on electoral mobilization in Africa focuses on core versus swing voters, clientelistic linkages, and ethnic voting. This paper adds an important yet understudied addition to this scholarship: the social and institutional dynamics of electoral mobilization. Drawing on a dataset of campaign visits in Ghana's 2016 and 2020 elections, we treat elections as an ongoing process, emphasizing the spatial targeting of campaign events and their ritualistic quality, as well as the social embeddedness of political parties in local constituencies. First, we find that a significant political learning process took place between 2016 and 2020 for candidates of the two major parties. Second, we note the importance of incumbency advantage – as opposed to ideological or demographic factors – in shaping campaign targeting, particularly the type of campaign visit. Third, we explain how political parties are socially embedded and rely on occupational groups like market associations and fisherfolk to mobilize voters. The paper concludes that research on election campaigns considers the social and institutional dynamics shaping political mobilization.

Keywords: Elections, campaigns, mobilization, social embeddedness, Ghana

1. Introduction

Election campaigns are now institutionalized features of African politics (Bleck and van de Walle, 2019). This has sparked a growing literature on how politicians mobilize voters (Kramon, 2019) and the appeals to which they respond (Gadjanova, 2021; Jöst and Lust, 2022). These studies emphasize the dynamics and mechanisms that drive electoral mobilization, including campaign targeting of core voters to drive turnout versus persuasion of swing voters, clientelistic linkages, and ethnic voting (Paget, 2019a). Yet the substantive nature of the election campaign visit – the type of activity, where stops occur, and who is involved – has received very little scholarly attention. This is a glaring omission, given that election campaign visits have a ritualistic quality and play a critical role in prospects for peace and stability (Oduro, 2021; Klaus, 2020). Election campaign visits involve candidates engaging in face-to-face interactions with as many citizens as possible, as well as party intermediaries building organizational capacity and legitimating authority at the grassroots.

This article explains the intrinsic nature of election campaign visits, shedding light on the motivations of political parties and the ruling elite, the perceptions and preferences of the electorate, and the exercise of political power. In contrast to existing approaches that narrowly focus on the formal and electoral aspects of political mobilization, we treat election campaigns as part of an ongoing social process where political parties are embedded in the local neighborhoods where campaign visits occur. For many ordinary Africans, campaign visits offer a grassroots voice for people – a space for uneducated, informal workers to enter the political power structures through local "branches" and access governmental higher-ups who actually make decisions (Brierley and Nathan, 2021; 2022). Candidates, and the campaigns they run, represent a vision of the future of the country, but also a connection to the past. For politicians, campaign visits offer a chance to present their policies and report on performance, recognize communities as citizens deserving of equal rights, and listen to the needs of their constituents.

We explain the intrinsic nature of election campaign visits by comparing Ghana's 2016 and 2020 presidential election campaigns. Most studies of African election campaigns focus on a single election (e.g., Ayee, 2017; Whitfield, 2009). By comparing two elections in the same country, we shed light on the institutional and social features that underlie political mobilization. Importantly, these two elections feature incumbents from different political parties but the same candidates (2016: John Mahama, NDC; 2020: Nana Dankwa Akufo-Addo, NPP). This allows us to interrogate how

incumbency advantage works in African elections, a condition that belies most elections across the continent. We draw on a dataset of campaign visits during Ghana's 2016 and 2020 elections to explain the targeting, types, and meanings of these campaign rallies. We use interviews with campaign organizers from both parties and more than ten years of immersive research in the country to further interpret the results.

We find little support that political parties target the location of their campaign visits and the type of activity based solely on instrumental concerns, such as: persuading voters in swing districts, turning out voters in core constituencies, strengthening clientelistic relationships, or distributing resources to candidates' ethnic homeland. Instead, we argue that the location of campaign visits is widely distributed across the entire country and is better explained by the differences between incumbency and opposition status, as well the type of intermediary. We also document a significant learning process between the 2016 and 2020 elections for both candidates. In addition, we note the growing public importance of traditional authorities in Ghana's elections and argue that this is part of the social embeddedness of electoral politics. Finally, we explain why and how occupational interest groups—e.g., fishermen, artisans, market associations, and footballers—serve as important intermediaries during campaigns and demonstrate how campaigns offer them a political voice and the opportunity to be recognized.

This paper makes four important contributions. First, we suggest that electoral campaigns are social processes where political actors and constituencies are embedded in society. Second, and relatedly, this ongoing social process forces us to think about campaign visits as more than events, but as a continuous process of political engagement between representatives and constituents. Third, the institutional feature of incumbency advantage shapes the type of campaign visits candidates can make. Fourth, this new way of thinking about electoral campaigns in Africa encourages scholars to move beyond narrow frameworks of clientelism, ethnic politics, and conventional voting behavior.

2. Explaining Election Campaign Visits

What role do campaign visits play in elections? Why do political parties rely on place-based campaigning? A large literature on electoral mobilization across the world provides preliminary insights. Theoretically, face-to-face campaign visits should help drive voter turnout (Gerber and Green, 2000). This strategy is particularly effective when parties open local field offices, as Barack

Obama did in more than 700 locations in 2008 (Masket, 2009). Parties use surrogates to advertise their message and win over swing voters (Hersh, 2015). In the US context, this shift to "ground campaign" tactics has a built-in flaw: the campaign activists tend to be ideologically extreme and demographically distinct from citizens, undermining their effectiveness (Enos and Hersh, 2015). This is a problem because voters are more likely to accept appeals from people with whom they identify (Zaller, 1992), and messages are more effective when communicated neighbor-to-neighbor (Sinclair et al., 2013). Therein lies the problem: the messenger matters.

The message also matters, but voters prefer being solicited based on broad principles and collective benefits, not pandering to specific identities (Hersh and Schaffner, 2013). Yet Kalla and Broockman (2018) recently summarized the persuasive effects of campaign contact, concluding they have very little effect on vote choice in general elections. Importantly, partisan cues and attributes quell the effectiveness of persuasion appeals during the campaign. Alternatively, campaign messaging and persuasive appeals do have limited effects on certain undecided sub-groups early in a campaign. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that campaign visits focus more on mobilization than persuasion and that more attention should be paid to the entire trajectory of the campaign to better understand the role of these visits.

There are instrumental reasons why political campaigns target specific constituencies. Politicians might use campaign visits to distribute patronage to clients to mobilize voters (Nichter, 2008; Larreguy et al., 2016), especially core supporters (Nathan, 2019). Incumbents might also use visits to invest in a party's organizational strength, trying to "buy off" potential opposition voters (e.g., Tripp, 2010; Paget, 2019b). In Kenya, vote buying during campaign visits is an informational cue – a strategy politicians use to lend credibility to their future promises (Kramon, 2016). A recent study in Ghana finds that parties prefer rallies in their core constituencies, while using canvassing and handouts in swing districts (Brierley and Kramon, 2020).

Campaign visits can take on an ethnic dimension (Taylor, 2017), where politicians allocate resources to mobilize core ethnic constituencies (Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005). Yet in Kenya, Horowitz finds that when politicians need to persuade non-co-ethnic swing voters, they use campaign rallies to garner broad-based support (Horowitz, 2016). It can even be counterproductive for candidates to campaign in their core ethnic areas because it signals ethnic favoritism (ibid, p. 331). In addition, voters who do

not have co-ethnics in the race are more likely to change their votes during a campaign (Horowitz, 2019), providing more evidence as to why parties focus their rallies in swing constituencies that include diverse ethnic groups. Parties might also target constituencies that had a narrow vote margin in the previous election or have a high number of registered voters.

These existing approaches too narrowly focus on the formal and electoral aspects of the campaigns without considering how campaigns are embedded in a larger social and institutional context. This is especially important in Africa, where rallies and other collective activities have a long history as part of popular mobilization against colonial rule (Branch and Mampilly, 2015) and in African elections (Mackenzie and Robinson, 1960). In addition, they miss the intrinsic nature of the campaign visit. Firstly, they do not account for the emotions the visit is meant to inspire and the type of activity – sod cutting, durbar of chiefs, engagement with traders – that forms the basis of the stop. Second, they do not explain who the intermediaries are, beyond basic demographic characteristics like ethnic group and income status, and their roles. This is important as peoples' political attitudes are "rooted in place" and heavily influenced by the group consciousness of a local community (Cramer, 2016). By not understanding local authority and cultural understandings of power (Schatzberg, 2001), scholars risk missing the meaning that campaign rallies hold for citizens at the grassroots.

3. The Meaning of Campaign Visits

Across Africa, campaign visits can be important avenues for citizen participation (Ferree, 2010) and political learning (Conroy-Krutz, 2016) and become part of the self-reinforcing power through which "democratization-by-elections" works (Lindberg, 2009). Campaign tours bring representatives and constituents together – much like a town hall – and create a political culture of "shared ideas, practices, and technologies that help individuals combine into publics and achieve representation" (Perrin, 2014, pp. 1). For the candidate, campaign visits can even serve as a constituency service, enabling them to engage with their constituents and better understand their needs and preferences (Fenno, 1978).

While not all campaign rallies offer back-and-forth deliberation, those that do can even help overcome clientelism, providing citizens a way to discuss programmatic policies (Wantchekon, 2013). For example, in Benin's 2011 election, Wantchekon found that town halls positively affected turnout (Wantchekon, 2017). In this way, campaign visits can foster the political spirit that Alexis de

Tocqueville wrote about years ago in *Democracy in America* – by producing a sense of belonging, shared identity, and intense partisanship.

Importantly, electoral campaigns are embedded in society. Campaign events only make sense within a relational, institutional, and cultural context. Politicians, campaign organizers, brokers, and foot soldiers are social beings (Polanyi, 1944) and develop political campaigns based on their relevant social contexts. This means that important interest groups and intermediaries are context-specific and depend on the authority structures in local communities (Paller, 2019a).

Moreover, political campaign rallies serve an important accountability function, putting them in face-to-face contact with citizens. In many African societies, political accountability rests on the dynamic process of talking and listening between constituents and representatives and then enacting these ideas (Paller, 2019b). Like town halls, campaign visits offer a space for political communication and engagement. They are a medium through which junior and senior politicians interact, requiring important "ground communication" (Paget, 2019a). They offer leaders the chance to legitimize their rule, demonstrating that they rule with the people as one unified family and nation (Schatzberg, 2001). Rallies provide citizens the chance to interpret public policies "in their own language" (Schaffer, 1998). In this way, they serve as cultural rituals (Miles, 1989). Finally, the tour around the country makes the candidate's presence more tangible, even reminding some far-off villages that they sit within the country's boundaries and deserve citizenship rights (Jourde, 2005).[1]

Campaigns do not occur in a historical vacuum. While they represent a vision of the country's future, they are also a connection to the past. They offer politicians the chance to explain where they fit into the country's historical development and how they build from political traditions. Through campaign manifestoes, parties offer clear policy prescriptions but also a hope for a better future (Van Gyampo and Debrah, 2012). In this way, campaigns rouse people's emotions and inspire them to get involved (Obama, 2020).

[1] For incumbents, campaign rallies serve as "visible representations of state power and can contribute to the effective broadcast of state authority over the entire realm" (Jourde, 2005, p. 424). It offers the head of state the chance to flex his or her political muscles.

Political parties tap into historical narratives – the stories people tell to make sense of their social or political realities (Klaus, 2020; Walsh, 2012; Patterson and Monroe, 1998). Kathleen Klaus explains how narratives can act like social movement frames (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614) by enabling "individuals to make meaning out of events and in so doing, these narratives help to 'organize experience and guide action'" (Klaus, 2020, p. 36). For political campaigns, "elites often use framing to manipulate citizens' judgments" (Druckman, 2001, p. 226). Politicians create a story around a broader political movement, solidifying boundaries between the different sides. In contentious politics, they rely on a dynamic model of turning grievances into mobilization (Simmons, 2014). In turn, they become an important driver of political mobilization.

Politicians often tap into narratives of larger forms of popular mobilization. For example, in Ghana, parties make connections to the founding fathers and emphasize their role in the anti-colonial struggle. In Zambia, parties tap into a broader narrative about the country's relationship with China (Larmer and Fraser, 2007). In South Africa, the African National Congress continues to peddle the narrative of being freedom fighters and liberators after Apartheid (Smith, 2019). These narratives serve a performative dimension and give campaigns meaning beyond the individual party or candidate, linking people through a shared sense of purpose (Wedeen, 1999).

4. Campaign Visits in Ghana

In 2020, Ghana held its eighth campaign season (since 1992) as part of the Fourth Republic and multi-party era. Its elections are some of the most institutionalized in Africa, and campaigns are engrained in the social fabric of everyday life. Every four years, campaign season ramps up, taking over the airwaves, newspaper headlines, and *trotro* conversations. But the spectacle of campaign season emerged far before the current era of multi-party democracy.

Massive crowds, street rallies, and even riots were emblematic of the traditional *asafo* crowds of pre-colonial Ghana, as well as the intense struggle against colonial rule (Paller, 2019). By 1949, the leaders of the anti-colonial struggle split into two factions – the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention People's Party (CPP). The former, led by J.B. Danquah, became synonymous with the phrase "Independence in the shortest possible time," while Kwame Nkrumah led the CPP with a populist fervor demanding "Independence now." Nkrumah's leadership won the 1951 elections, setting the stage for his succession to head of state of the newly independent Ghana in 1957 (Bob-

Milliar, 2014a). As the first black country to gain Independence, Ghana honored the achievement with a massive celebration that included black intellectuals, heads-of-state, and pan-Africanists from all over the world. Nkrumah declared, "We face neither East nor West. We face forward." This massive rally spilled over into dancing in the streets, and this intense national pride – inspired by popular mobilization – still resonates at campaign rallies today.

This brief history of Ghanaian popular mobilization is important as it sets the stage for campaign events in the Fourth Republic. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) is built on Kwame Nkrumah's lineage and political tradition. He built his Independence movement with the support of "verandah boys," a collection of young people in organizations like the Young Pioneers and Builder's Brigade who sought control over their lives outside colonial rule, but also outside the traditional leaders and elites who dominated public life. Former military leader-turned-democrat Jerry John Rawlings incorporated this tradition into the founding of the NDC, using mass mobilization and populism as an electoral tactic but also drawing on violence when needed. NDC campaigns continue to use propaganda and foster an esprit de corps to maintain order and discipline in the party's ranks.

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) derives its support from the Ashanti Region and traces its lineage to the UGCC business and political elite. Many residents in marginalized communities – like poor urban neighborhoods and villages in the northern regions – view the NPP as a party with arrogant and distant leaders who speak "big English." In the NPP, one common complaint is that the youth must "wait their turn," but that turn never seems to come. NDC and NPP political campaigns must confront these differing public sentiments, even though many of their public policies – universal public education and improvements in healthcare benefits – are quite similar. Here, mobilization matters more than the messaging.

Campaign visits offer parties the chance to use the existing narratives to either drive mobilization or attempt to change the narrative altogether. Throughout the past eight multi-party elections, the parties have learned from each other about what wins elections, incorporating the successful elements into their campaigns. The NDC has professionalized its campaign, hiring PR firms, graphic designers, and data analysts. They have even formed a group of "Social Intellectuals" to cater to middle-class voters. The NPP has built up its grassroots networks, spending more money on local organizational

structures, vigilance at polling stations, and even expanding its propaganda machine (Bob-Milliar and Paller, 2018).

Both parties invest significant resources in their ground campaign, relying on party organizers – deemed foot soldiers in the public discourse – to mobilize support (Bob-Milliar, 2012; Brierley and Nathan, 2019).[2] They are market women, fisherfolk, keep-fit club members, boxers, rappers, biker boys, fishmongers, assemblypersons, footballers, macho-men, land guards, fetish priests, tailors, musicians, actors, comedians, and imams. They gain recognition from the political parties, aim to raise their status in their communities, and often gain valuable resources and government contracts. Moreover, the parties rely on them for their ability to mobilize votes and legitimate their authority at the grassroots level (Klaus and Paller, 2017). In the past two campaigns, the NDC and NPP have formally recognized these occupational and social "interest" groups and incorporated them into the organizational apparatus of the party. In addition, while traditional authorities have historically had a complicated relationship with Ghanaian politicians, they have reemerged as powerful intermediaries, and parties are quick to publicize their relationship and make courtesy calls on them during campaign stops.

Yet we still know very little about why certain groups and traditional authorities are privileged over others. For example, while chiefs are likely to serve as "development brokers" (Baldwin, 2015) and ethnic kingmakers (Koter, 2013), their role in the trajectory of the political campaign remains largely unknown. Our research design enables us to answer these questions because we can uncover the social and institutional dynamics that contribute to the trajectory and decision-making in a campaign, especially regarding campaign visits. Comparing the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns in Ghana offers leverage because the candidates are the same, but their roles in government have switched. This important switch enables us to explain the role incumbency advantage plays during campaign seasons.

[2] CDD-Ghana in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, tracked the escalating cost of campaigns since 2012, recording a 59% increase in the cost of running for political office between 2012 and 2016. The cost of running for parliament was estimated at GHC 4 million and the cost of running a presidential campaign was estimated at about GHC 575 million (CDD-Ghana – "Reform Recommendations & Roadmap for Implementation Produced by Stakeholder Working Group").

5. Data and Methods

We compile the Ghana Campaign Visits Database to document public campaign activity by the two major parties and candidates (NPP and NDC) in the lead-up to Ghana's presidential election. This database contains visits from the 2016 and 2020 election campaigns. We define campaign visits as electioneering events with the explicit and publicly-stated objective of mobilizing voters and amassing electoral support. These stops are location- and time-bound and are publicly announced via social media. We combine events from the candidates' Facebook pages. We do not include private events with intermediaries, nor events that are not publicized as part of the formal campaign marketing.

This dataset is the first to record campaign stops across Ghana in a way that captures the full geographic extent of their visits.[3] This enables us to provide a geographic distribution of modern campaign activity and historical trends. Campaigns' use of social media allows us to develop a more complete count of campaign visits compared to newspaper accounts (e.g., Horowitz, 2022; Rauschenbauch, 2015), as journalists were typically based in major cities and did not cover all campaign stops. While we are reliant on campaigns' self-recording, the public and social nature of the Facebook pages prevent candidates from fabricating visits and enables people affiliated with the campaign to upload information to ensure that a visit is documented. While we have some reason to believe that John Mahama's campaign did not document every visit they made in 2016,[4] we are confident that the database captures the most complete universe of campaign visits in Ghana to date.

We code the following types of campaign visits: rally, official business, courtesy call, and interaction. We define rallies as "public event[s] at which speakers address an audience face-to-face for the ostensible purpose of politically mobilizing it" (Paget, 2019a). We also include mini-rallies in this coding. Official business includes events where candidates use the commission or inauguration of state projects as campaign events. This coding includes commissions, sod cuttings, inaugurations, official visits, and inspections. Courtesy calls are visits to prominent local authorities – usually traditional authorities or elders – to seek permission to visit their jurisdictions. They are specifically

[3] Horowitz's (2022) analysis of Kenya's 2007-8 election focuses exclusively on campaign rallies. Brierley and Kramon (2020) document different campaign strategies, but is limited because it draws from self-reported surveys. Rauschenbach (2015) catalogs campaign visits in Ghana's 2012 election from newspaper reports. Paget's (2022) analysis of rallies in Tanzania focus on a subset of the country and one opposition party.

[4] Interviews with the NDC chairman suggest that over the course of the two campaigns, the NDC learned how important recording campaign visits on Facebook could be – by 2020, they made sure to document every single visit.

designated for electioneering and publicly announced. We include durbars in this coding. Finally, interactions are any other events where candidates meet with groups of constituents. This coding includes meetings, visits, interactions, public ceremonies, campaign launches, whistle stops, drive-throughs, press conferences, and tours.

We supplement this analysis with a collation of Ghanaian-based newspapers from January of the election year to polling day. The analysis includes the *Daily Graphic* and the *Ghanaian Times*, the NPP-aligned *Daily Guide* and *Chronicle,* and the NDC-aligned *Herald* and *Heritage*. 180 events are included in 2016 and 212 in 2020. We code the following variables: date of campaign event; grievance; intermediary; interest group; infrastructure promise; distributive claim (e.g., reference to promises made to specific groups of people); public claim (e.g., reference to claim in best interest of "the Ghanaian people" or "Good of the country"); evaluation (of past performance). This data helps us present a descriptive analysis of campaign visits in Ghana through a detailed schedule of campaign visits, in contrast to existing studies that rely on survey responses (e.g., Brierley and Kramon, 2020; Paget, 2019a).

Finally, we draw on more than ten years of immersive research studying elections and political parties in Ghana to interpret the results. We also interviewed party activists from both political parties to better understand the logics and motivations of campaign visits.

6. Findings

The campaign visits database provides a descriptive picture of electioneering in Ghana. First, we ask whether the 2016 and 2020 elections demonstrate any notable differences. We find that the presidential candidates made more campaign visits in 2020 than in 2016 (539 to 317). Part of the reason for this is that campaigns did a better job of publicizing their visits via social media, demonstrating how forums like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp are now firmly embedded into the technological infrastructure of party organizations. Mahama, in particular, appeared to underreport campaign activity on Facebook during the 2016 campaign; the news media covered more of his campaign activity in June, July, and August. Nonetheless, politicians now recognize that both the visits and their social media announcements are crucial tenets of Ghanaian electioneering, suggesting that political learning took place (Lindberg, 2006).

Table 1: Campaign Visits by Type and Election

Activity type	*election*		***Total***
	2016	2020	
courtesy call	18	130	148
interaction	40	159	199
Official business	9	119	128
rally	250	131	381
Total	317	539	856

$\chi 2=246.630 \cdot df=3 \cdot Cramer's\ V=0.537 \cdot p=0.000$

The change in the type of visit is also notable. In 2016, the vast majority of campaign visits were rallies (250 of 317). In 2020, these visits were far more equally distributed among the four different types: courtesy call (130), interaction (159), official business (119), and rally (131). Part of this can be explained by how the party records its visits via Facebook. But even if this explains some of the differences, it suggests that campaigns specifically target and explicitly recognize their intermediaries (courtesy calls and interactions) and accomplishments (official business). It also demonstrates the limits of rallies, suggesting that it can be more cost effective to rely on campaign visits that are more targeted to groups around specific issues. Traditional authorities and occupational groups demand interactions, and politicians cater to their demands. In addition, Akufo-Addo used official business activities as campaign events much more than Mahama did in 2016 (119 to 9).

Campaign visits are distributed across the entire country. There do not appear to be any major trends with respect to courtesy calls and interactions, although there are clusters of high levels of courtesy calls in Greater Accra (28), Ashanti (19), Central (14), and Western North Regions (10). Greater Accra and Ashanti are the largest regions; however, all of these spaces have established and politically important traditional leadership structures. Rallies are also distributed across the country, though they are more clustered in the south. This is likely because the south has a greater population density, making rallies an effective campaign strategy. Official visits also seem clustered in the south, suggesting two possibilities. One is that infrastructure projects are spatially targeted to the south, as some scholars have argued (Abdulai, 2017). The second is that politicians (namely Akufo-Addo) focus official business closer to the capital for efficiency purposes and focus other types of campaign activity in

other parts of the country. Across all types, Greater Accra (197) and Ashanti (115) regions have the highest number of visits, demonstrating their importance in Ghana's electoral politics.

Figure 1. Frequency of Stop Types (Across all Elections and Candidates)

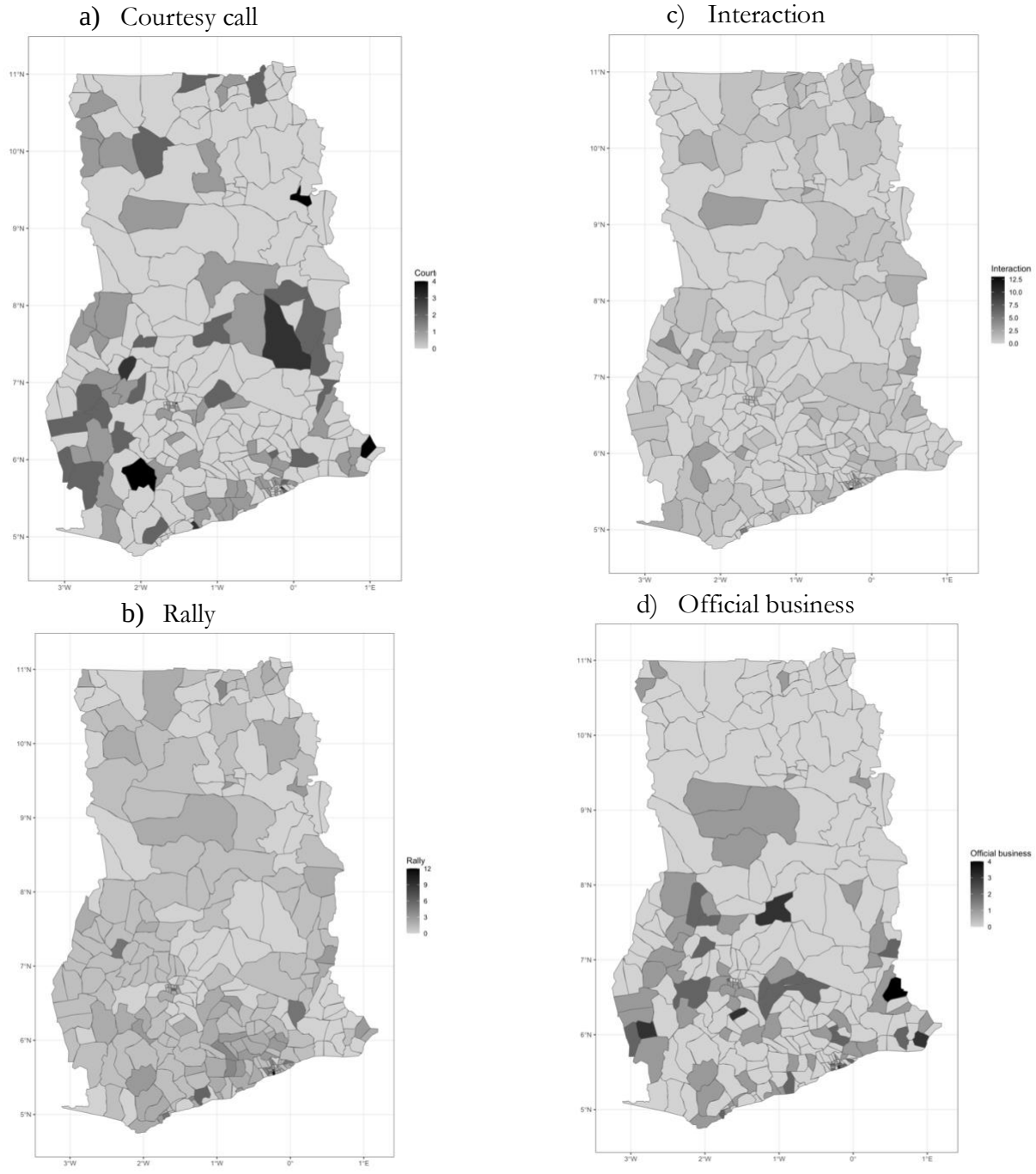


Table 2: Stop Type by Region

Region of Campaign Event	*Activity type*				***Total***
	Courtesy call	Interaction	Official business	Rally	
Ahafo	9	2	5	6	22
Ashanti	19	23	23	50	115
Bono	5	12	5	15	37
Bono East	8	2	8	9	27
Central	14	15	8	48	85
Eastern	7	19	11	57	94
Greater Accra	28	57	24	88	197
North East	2	5	0	2	9
Northern	5	9	2	11	27
Oti	8	6	2	9	25
Savannah	3	5	2	8	18
Upper East	6	10	1	14	31
Upper West	7	4	2	10	23
Volta	9	9	15	14	47
Western	8	17	10	29	64
Western North	10	4	9	10	33
Total	148	199	127	380	854

$\chi 2=101.839$ · $df=51$ · Cramer's $V=0.199$ · Fisher's $p=0.000$

Our second research question asks whether there are any notable differences between candidates. Akufo-Addo (545) recorded more campaign visits than Mahama (312). The difference is especially stark concerning rallies (Akufo-Addo (317) to Mahama (64)). Mahama was far more likely to rely on courtesy calls (101 to 47) and interactions (135 to 64), while Akufo-Addo used official business (117 to 12). While Akufo-Addo appeared dependent on rallies in 2016, he supplemented these visits with official business in 2020, outpacing rallies 115 to 97. The data suggest significant political learning by

Mahama: he increased his number of campaign visits from 53 in 2016 to 259 in 2020 and performed much better in the election. The NDC won 137 parliamentary seats in 2020, an increase of 31 seats. Mahama's total vote share increased to 47.36% in 2020 from 44.53% in 2016. These visits were distributed across the country, though we see a net increase in the western (Western, Western North) and eastern (Volta, Bono East) parts of the country. Akufo-Addo's activity appears to decrease in the north in 2020 compared to 2016, even though his total number stayed relatively the same (264 to 280). One explanation is that he relied far more on his running mate Mahamadu Bawumia, who is from the north, to campaign on his behalf in 2020.

Table 3: Visit Type by Candidate

Activity type	*Candidate*		***Total***
	John Mahama	Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo	
Courtesy call	101	47	148
Interaction	135	64	199
Official business	12	117	129
Rally	64	317	381
Total	312	545	857

χ2=253.924 · df=3 · Cramer's V=0.544 · p=0.000

Table 4: Stop Type by Candidate, 2016 Election

Activity type	*Candidate*		***Total***
	John Mahama	Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo	
Courtesy call	4	14	18
Interaction	11	29	40
Official business	8	1	9
Rally	30	220	250
Total	53	264	317

χ2=41.395 · df=3 · Cramer's V=0.361 · Fisher's p=0.000

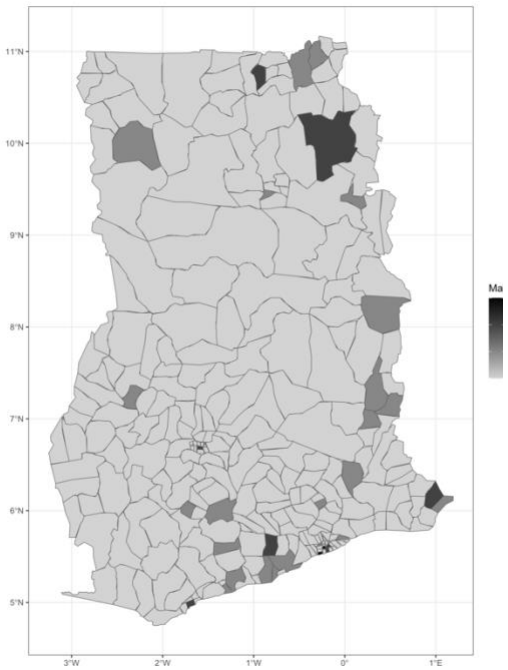
Table 5: Stop Type by Candidate, 2020 Election

Activity type	*Candidate*		***Total***
	John Mahama	Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo	
Courtesy call	97	33	130
Interaction	124	35	159
Official business	4	115	119
Rally	34	97	131
Total	259	280	539

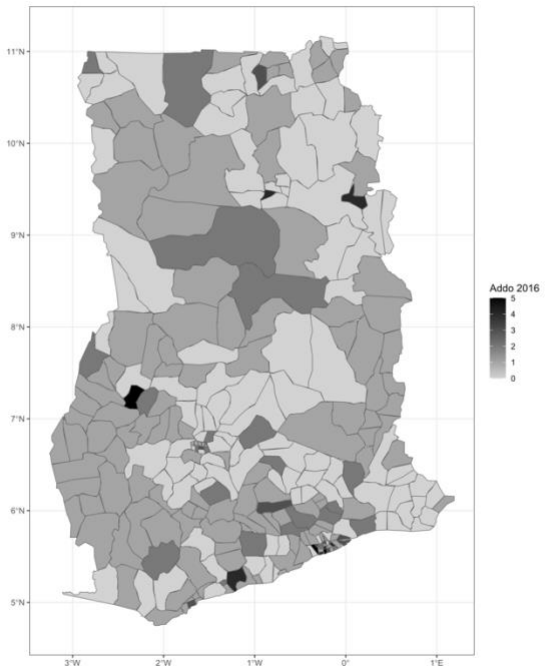
$\chi 2=214.669$ · $df=3$ · Cramer's $V=0.631$ · $p=0.000$

Figure 2. Total Stops by Candidate and Election

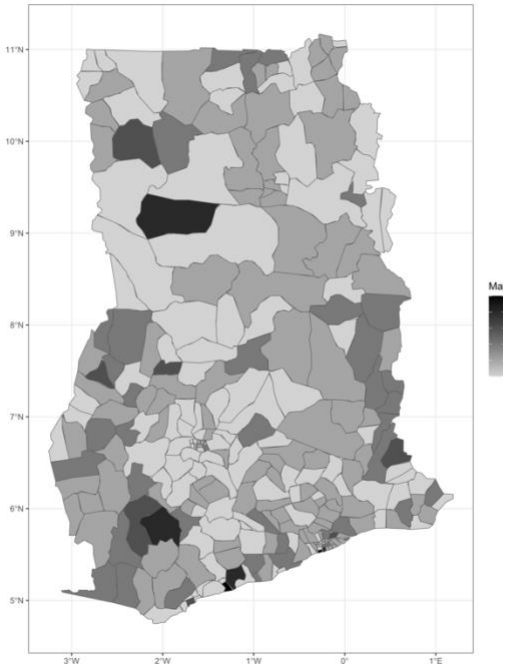
a) Mahama 2016



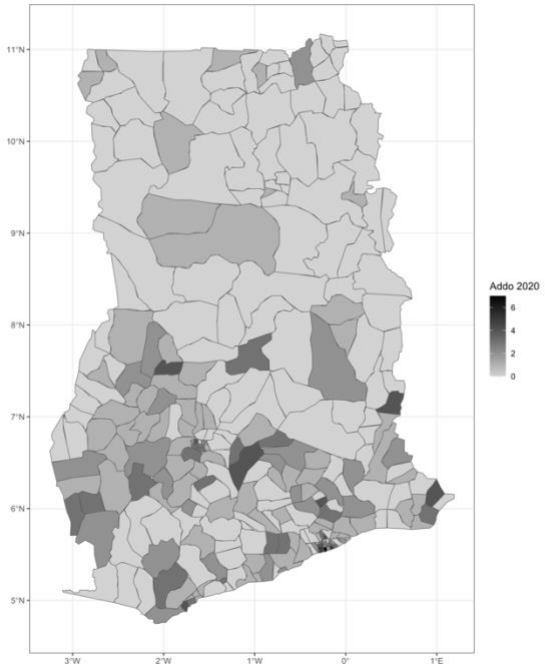
c) Addo 2016



b) Mahama 2020



d) Addo 2020



Third, we test several hypotheses derived from the literature on voting behavior in Africa; the results are not statistically nor substantively significant (see Appendix A). We ask whether the type of constituency – core versus swing – correlates with whether it is targeted for a campaign visit. Existing studies in Ghana suggest that parties target campaign visits to voters who are unlikely to turn out rather than use visits to persuade new voters (Rauschenbach, 2015). Consistent with this finding, candidates are most likely to use rallies in core constituencies and other strategies in swing constituencies (Brierley and Kramon, 2020). Our data suggest that a narrow typology that collapses constituencies to core versus swing or co-ethnic versus non-co-ethnic does not have much explanatory power on the campaign trail.

We find very little support for these conventional political science explanations.[5] Candidates are no more likely to target swing constituencies with any visits (H1) or constituencies with more registered voters (H2). The type of visit also does not vary significantly, as campaigns do not target core constituencies more with rallies (H3) (Brierley and Kramon, 2020) or interactions and courtesy calls (H5), nor swing constituencies with official business, courtesy calls, or interactions (H4). Even incumbents do not appear to use official visits more to win over swing districts (H6). Finally, neither Mahama (H8) nor Akufo-Addo (H9) are more likely to visit their ethnic homeland. These "negative" results suggest we need to generate hypotheses with qualitative analysis and descriptive insights.

7. Discussion

7.1 The Value of Incumbency Advantage

Opposition parties are relatively weak across Africa (Rakner and van de Walle, 2009) and are often limited to regional challengers (Wahman, 2017). Opposition parties rarely defeat incumbents (Bob-Milliar and Paller, 2018). It is common knowledge that incumbent parties can use state resources to fund their campaigns and have discretion over bureaucrats (Brierley, 2020). However, we find that incumbency plays two important, less-documented roles during the campaign season. First, sitting presidents can use public policies to serve electoral ends, promoting public goods for electoral gain. Second, presidents can communicate directly with the nation on a regular basis, confronting crises and offering a plan for the future.

[5] Hypotheses 1-9 and model outputs are listed in Appendix A.

During the 2020 campaign season, the COVID-19 crisis allowed President Akufo-Addo to govern and campaign simultaneously. To combat the virus, the government provided free water, electricity, and financial inducements to those in need. Normally, these policies would be considered "handouts" or pandering to the poor.[6] Additionally, safety protocols restricted the opposition from moving and campaigning, hampering their ability to mobilize voters. At the same time, the President spoke directly to the nation on TV on a weekly basis, promoting an image of unity and stability. The pandemic allowed the sitting president to "rally around the flag." It also showed his competency: Ghana became an early leader in virus-prevention efforts. These opportunities were far more important than the financial advantage of a sitting president (Brierley and Kramon, 2020), especially because Mahama already had a successful fundraising apparatus due to his previous time in office.[7]

Both candidates were consistently on the campaign trail in the lead-up to the 2020 election. In November and December, both candidates were very active campaigners. The decisions of where to visit to close out the campaigns are telling. Both candidates finished their campaigns in Greater Accra, visiting markets, neighborhoods, and religious sites across the city. Mahama toured Volta, Northern, Savannah, Upper East, Ashanti, and Eastern in these final two months. Akufo-Addo toured Ashanti, Eastern, Western, and Central. While we don't find robust evidence for Brierley and Kramon's 2020 findings that the incumbent will invest in tours to swing districts while the opposition focuses mainly on core constituencies, we do find that candidates ended their campaigns with visits to swing constituencies. Akufo-Addo spent far more of his time on sod-cutting and commissioning projects, which allowed the NPP to use state resources to visit different parts of the country. To a much lesser extent, Mahama used this to his advantage in 2016, demonstrating the power of incumbency.

These visits also point to a less obvious trend: the emergence of Ashanti and Greater Accra Region as "campaign kingmakers." With the rapidly growing population of Kumasi and Accra, candidates can mobilize voters from around the country in these population hubs (many still return to their hometowns to place their votes). For example, Mahama spent significant time visiting the Ashanti Region in 2020 (far more than in 2016), long considered an NPP stronghold. But he visited specific constituencies that fit into his broader campaign narrative, including visits to *zongos* and cosmopolitan

[6] For example, the NPP's 1 Factory, 1 District initiative and the NDC Free SHS program face these critiques.
[7] Alternatively, when Akufo-Addo was in opposition in 2016, he relied on fundraisers with wealthy donors, especially those in the diaspora like the UK branch of the Young Executive Forum of the NPP to raise money (Bob-Milliar, 2019).

neighborhoods, especially with residents from the North. For example, on his last tour to Ashanti, he visited many *zongos*, Islamic leaders, and small-scale miners. As one-party activist notes, "Power passes through Kumasi to Accra."[8]

Akufo-Addo used his campaign events as accountability tours. For example, at a campaign stop in Eastern Region, he stated,

> I have proven that I did not come to lie to Ghanaians but to work for the progress and development of Ghana and for all Ghanaians. I am asking the people of Ghana to assess me on the basis of my record, and, if they are satisfied with it, they should give me an opportunity to do more for them by voting for me. (10/2/20)[9]

But these tours also served as a source of comfortable validation: incumbents visited core constituencies (in this case, Akufo-Addo's home region) to validate their rule. For example, at a religious event in Ashanti Region, Akufo-Addo said,

> I have come to beg you again for the elevation you gave me during the 2016 elections... I leave everything to you to be the judge of the work I have done for you and the nation. Be a judge of my works and vote me into office to continue doing more for you. (8/2/20)

In 2016, Mahama did the same thing. He claimed at one campaign stop, "We have done so well" (9/18/16).[10] Campaigns offer the opportunity for incumbents to account for their performance face-to-face with constituents.

The status of incumbency forced opposition candidate Mahama into a different role in the accountability relationship: as a listener rather than reporting on performance. In the early stages of campaign season, Mahama went on a "listening tour," seeking to distinguish his current campaign from his 2016 incumbency campaign and Akufo-Addo's 2020 campaign. For example, at a campaign event in Greater Accra, he explained,

> One major regret I have is not speaking directly to the people during my time in office, and so that vacuum was filled with a lot of propaganda. So, this time when I come, I

[8] In the news analysis, Greater Accra had 17 events in 2016 and 45 in 2020. Ashanti had 8 in 2016 and 10 in 2020. One reason for this is that the media covers more events in Greater Accra.
[9] List of news articles are included in Appendix B.
[10] Interestingly, this is a district held by the NPP.

> will go around and directly speak to the people on what we are doing and some of our policies. (11/3/20)

He also combined these rallies with door-to-door canvassing, collapsing the clear boundaries between different ground campaign strategies (10/7/20).[11] Of course, campaign tours also provide the candidates the chance to literally "see" and "experience" the progress or lack thereof in the country. As Akufo-Addo snarked in 2016, "Our roads are bad. The president is campaigning by helicopter, but I campaign by road, so I know the condition of roads in the country." (12/2/16)

Campaign visits offer one of the few mechanisms of accountability Ghanaian citizens have that can help change public policies. For example, politicians often abandon development projects, especially those of previous presidents. This issue comes up again and again on the campaign trail. To change this narrative, Mahama promised to complete all abandoned projects and used this to his advantage when touring the country. On a visit to the Western North region, he tells his audience, "I am disappointed traveling on the Benchema-Oseikojokrom road, still in this really terrible state. We had begun work on the road when I was in office, but the Akufo-Addo government decided to stop the project." (2/19/20)[12] These tours force the candidates to account directly to the people and provide the citizens the opportunity to change the narrative.

The Re-Emergence of Traditional Authorities and Associational Groups

Mahama has never wavered from his goal to continue the legacy of Jerry John Rawlings and "open up the north" (Mahama, 2012). His decisions on the campaign trail bear this out. In his inaugural campaign speech in 2016, he promised to make the Tamale Airport the hub of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, claiming to "open up the Northern Region to the rest of the world" (8/9/16).[13] These appeals also build off the legacy of first president Kwame Nkrumah, who sought to move the country forward by extending infrastructural development to the North. In one rally, Mahama claims,

> Nkrumah was not ruling for that time. He was ruling for the future. He argued that the government, under his administration, has been able to embark on massive

[11] Brierley and Kramon (2020) treat these as distinct campaign strategies.

[12] Alternatively, as opposition candidate in 2016, Akufo-Addo made a similar promise to restore all "collapsed programmes" started under President Kufuor (10/9/16).

[13] Mahama makes a similar promise to Upper West in 2020 by building a trans-Africa highway, as well as building the Wa Airport (9/3/20). In 2016, he campaigned in Northern Region and stated, "Anytime we are in power the North sees more development. For instance, President Rawlings ensured electricity got to us, people said we could not get it, but he pushed for us to get it…this tells you that we can deliver for Ghanaians" (8/24/16).

> infrastructural developments across the length and breadth of the country, like Nkrumah. (8/26/16)[14]

In this same speech, Mahama emphasized the importance of building a hospital in Tamale. This historical narrative drove the 2020 campaign as well, as he campaigned, "Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was an inspiration to many countries around the world. On this day, I want to salute him for his tireless and monumental contribution to our nation's history." (9/21/2020).[15]

It is important to note that politicians do not just campaign for the votes in the Northern Regions. They go to neighborhoods – *zongos* and squatter settlements – in Ghana's largest cities where northerners live to mobilize support (Paller, 2019). For the NDC, this is part of their narrative to encompass a party for "all other tribes" beyond the Ashanti. For example, toward the very end of the 2016 campaign season, Mahama held a rally in Ashaiman, a now sprawling and cosmopolitan municipality that started as a squatter settlement outside of Tema in the 1960s, just 30 minutes outside of Accra; Tema is predominantly populated by Northerners and migrants from surrounding countries. During this rally, he explained his plans to construct a railway line to facilitate the haulage of goods from the Tema Port to the Northern Region (12/6/16). He even mentioned that this would also attract businesses from neighboring Togo, Burkina Faso, and Mali. Mahama also visited a poor neighborhood in Accra and promised to train 10,000 *kayayei* – female migrant head porters. At a rally in Upper West, Mahama returned to report back on his accomplishments, a key feature of democratic accountability – "I'm your son. I was sent to do a job [and] I have come back to report to you that I have done that job satisfactorily for the people of Ghana," (11/18/2016) invoking the language of a "political family" (Schatzberg, 2001; Paller, 2014).

Akufo-Addo had the opposite task: to convince Northerners and residents of *zongos* that the NPP is a party open to them and that there is social space beyond just the Asante. He is often accused of being elitist and aloof, often highlighted during campaign visits. While Mahama calmly interacts with ordinary people, Akufo-Addo brings his presidential chair wherever he goes. In an attempt to win

[14] For more on Nkrumah's vision of liberation for the future, see Ahlman (2021).
[15] Akufo-Addo used similar rhetoric on his campaign through the Ashanti Region in 2016, which he called "The Restoration of Hope Tour" (10/23/16).

over support, he established the Zongo Development Fund in 2017 and relied on Islamic leaders as intermediaries when he visited their neighborhoods (2/16/16). At a rally in Nima, Accra, he stated,

> Since 1957, Zongos have never been mentioned in Ghana's budget, but my first budget will provide money for the Zongo Development Fund. During the Kufuor administration, Islamic scholars and teachers, as well as Christian Roman Catholic teachers, were paid allowances. The NDC came to scrap it, but I will restore the Islamic teacher allowance.

By invoking the concept of "restoration," Akufo-Addo connected his policies to a proud past, while also pandering for votes from the "Muslim constituency" (10/11/16). He followed this up with the creation of the Ministry of Inner-City and Zongo Development once in office, and told residents of Manhyia North in Ashanti, "There are better things in store for the Zongos, and I, therefore, urge you to keep me in power so that I have more time to do more for the Zongos" (8/1/20).[16]

While Mahama held the strength with Northerners and Zongo residents, he had to catch up with appeals to cocoa farmers. On his visit in 2016, he outlined a new cocoa policy in the country (10/28/16). The NPP criticized the NDC administration for its handling of the cocoa industry, especially the policy to cancel bonuses to cocoa farmers. At a rally in the Western North Region, Akufo-Addo campaigned, "Under Mahama, the cocoa sector is in decline. When, God-willing, you give me the opportunity, the good work President Kufuor did for the growth of the cocoa sector is one I am also going to emulate" (8/11/16). Akufo-Addo promised mass spraying to assist the cocoa farmers (8/12/16), as well as the restoration of farmers' bonuses. He emphasized new policies that would increase the price farmers received when selling the beans (11/13/16). Akufo-Addo offered a corrective, "The pride and prestige that came with cocoa farming would be restored" (11/4/16). During the 2020 campaign, Akufo-Addo celebrated the deal he struck with Cote d'Ivoire to help cocoa farmers gain a better crop price (9/30/20). Yet, at a rally in the Eastern Region, Akufo-Addo catered to other farmers by claiming "the times of overreliance on cocoa are over" (7/4/16) and to Bono Region farmers, "The same priority attention that has been given to the cultivation of cocoa over the years will be given to the production of cashews" (3/21/16).[17]

[16] He also promised to build 16 secondary schools in Zongo communities in each of the 16 regions (8/1/20).
[17] Mahama countered this appeal with a similar promise in Bono Region, "Wenchi deserves a cashew processing factory to serve the export market because the area is one of the largest producers of cashew in Ghana" (9/22/20).

Throughout the two campaign seasons, political parties targeted key associational and social groups on their visits. Most notable were fisherfolk, cocoa farmers, footballers, small-scale miners, market women, and spare parts dealers. During the 2016 campaign, the issue of small-scale mining was a flashpoint. Both candidates confronted the situation, with Akufo-Addo stating, "I was here in Obuasi to say that Galamsey, which I prefer to call small-scale mining, will be regularized to ensure that the youth all find work to do" (7/15/16). This problem was not resolved by 2020, and Akufo-Addo continued to place mining at the center of Ghana's history. At a campaign stop in the Ashanti Region, he said,

> Our forefathers were into mining, but they did not destroy the land as is being done now. That is what I've said, and we are bringing in measures to streamline mining in the mining sector. Community mining is the way to go, and my government is working to ensure that we get it done. (12/2/20)

Mahama also campaigned on this and promised to set up a gold mining board in every district to streamline small-scale mining (10/3/20).

Reaching out and appealing to fisherfolk is more than public policy and messaging – it is a strategic decision to formalize associational groups and incorporate them into the party's organizational structure. The NPP relied on this strategy in 2016 to make inroads into the Greater Accra, Central, and Western Regions – all with large populations of swing voters. For example, at a campaign event in Elmina, Akufo-Addo explained, "We are going to restore the Fisheries Management Committees. They will operate, as originally conceived, under the leadership of the chief fishermen, so that the issues of premix fuel and outboard motors will be under the direct control of the fishermen" (5/3/16). Alternatively, at a campaign stop in the Oti Region, Mahama catered to their needs and recognized them as a symbol of national pride, "Fisherfolk are important to the development of this country. My government will implement policies that will ease the financial burden on them, grow their business and also enable them to work in peace" (8/25/20). He made similar arguments at rallies in Eastern Region (5/31/20).

By focusing entirely on political parties and the role of brokers (see, e.g., Brierley and Nathan, 2019), most analyses miss how campaign season offers the chance for occupational and social groups to be recognized, providing them important legitimacy in their communities. Local opinion leaders spend lots of time and energy – either as party activists or with them – to get their interest group on the

official list of invitees when campaigns come to town. This can help integrate their needs into public policy or get them handouts like vehicles, office space, or other particularistic goods. For example, when Mahama visited Central Region in 2020, he noted, "I am personally committed to enabling a partnership with the Council for Private Schools that is mutually beneficial to them and the state" (3/15/20). This public acknowledgement signals a powerful form of recognition by the candidate and affirms the partnership between the NDC and the educational group.

Mahama made a similar proclamation in Bono East with a group of mechanics, "We are going to collaborate with the Eureka Garages Association…and all other garage associations in the country to build the training centres with the modern diagnostic machine to train their members and be able to stay in business" (9/23/20). He made a similar promise to Suame Magazine – the country's largest industrial area with metal engineering and mechanic shops located in Kumasi. The NDC would "introduce modern diagnostic equipment to modify the methods of repairing and fixing vehicles," essentially going digital (9/17/20). These interactions have symbolic power: By reaching out to Suame Magazine, Mahama catered to a specific group of people and recognized them as important stakeholders in Ghana's democracy while also promoting an industrial and job creation strategy to modernize the sector for the 21st century.

Perhaps most interestingly, we find that campaigns are reaching out to and relying on the support of traditional authorities far more than they have in past campaigns. In 2016, we documented 13 campaign stops that explicitly mentioned traditional authorities; the number increased to 70 by 2020. One reason for this is that local communities have come to rely far more on traditional authorities for basic development as liberal democracy has failed to deliver a "democratic dividend" (Bob-Milliar, 2014b). But another reason is that chiefs are far less scared to be aligned with political parties. In fact, having strong connections to parties in power can even bolster their legitimacy at the grassroots level. There is now an expectation that any time a politician visits a constituency, they must make a courtesy call on the traditional authority.

Presidents and traditional authorities have a long and complicated history in Ghana (Rathbone, 2000; Sackeyfio-Lenoch, 2014). However, during campaigns, the relationship is simplified: Politicians rely on chiefs to deliver votes, while chiefs use the relationship with politicians to legitimate their rule. While chiefs are not supposed to play a role in partisan politics, these lines break down during

campaigns. For example, Akufo-Addo is explicit in his message to the Asante chiefs during the 2016 campaign, "If the chiefs and people of Ashanti hear my cry and give me their support, all the abandoned projects I enumerated will be completed during my stay in office" (7/15/16).

But campaigns also offer chiefs the space to serve as community spokespeople. For example, during a visit to the Ekumfi Traditional Council in 2016, the acting President of the Traditional Council told Akufo-Addo that "nothing had been done" to build a landing beach for the district and that children needed a school feeding program (11/2/16). However, Mahama claimed throughout the campaign that these sessions seemed to work and helped him be accountable to the people. At a campaign stop in Eastern Region, he explained, "After chiefs told me about the deplorable roads, I promised to fix them for the evacuation of people and goods, especially cocoa, to the marketing centers to earn foreign exchange for the country" (4/14/16). These connections can also intensify rivalries between chiefs. During the 2016 campaign, Akufo-Addo visited a divisional chief in Obuasi instead of the Paramount. This sowed confusion in the city while also strengthening one side's position in a heated dispute. Nevertheless, campaign visits signal important alliances between parties and traditional authorities.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, we compare Ghana's 2016 and 2020 election campaigns by paying close attention to the interactions between political parties and local communities. By doing so, we demonstrate how electoral campaigns are social processes; they provide social and occupational groups the opportunities to participate in and shape the Ghanaian state. Moreover, we place political parties in their appropriate historical context. In this way, electoral campaigns are more than events that occur every four years; instead, they are chances for parties to draw from a rich ideological tradition and offer a vision for the future. This theoretical point generalizes to every setting. For example, in the United States, Donald Trump built off a long tradition of white supremacy in the Republican Party to mobilize voters, while Barack Obama catered to a cosmopolitan liberal-internationalist agenda for his support. Failing to account for these historical narratives and their roles in mobilizing support would lead scholars to the wrong conclusions about voting behavior and political mobilization.[18]

[18] This might be one reason why polls were so off in 2016, and to a lesser extent in 2020.

The findings contribute to a long literature in political science about when and how campaigns matter (Jacobson, 2015). Moreover, they do so in the context of African elections, which are understudied yet contain campaign strategies of mobilization and persuasion evident across the world (Nathan, 2019; Horowitz, 2022). In particular, this helps explain the meaning of campaigns to local populations, as well as the mechanisms through which incumbency, brokerage, and grassroots organizing work. The next step is to assess the effects of these campaigns on voting behavior – to explain the extent to which these campaign visits helped politicians win at the polls. This will assess the substantive impact of grassroots mobilization (Bischof and Kurer, 2020).

By treating electoral campaigns as a social process, we can explain the meaning of party politics to the citizens of Ghana. This perspective demonstrates how local actors use political parties for personal empowerment rather than focusing only on the party organization. In doing so, we further show how political parties are embedded in power dynamics external to their own making. For example, parties are mechanisms of legitimacy for traditional authorities, enforcing their power at the grassroots level. This provides a new way of thinking about electoral campaigns beyond a narrow understanding of vote margins and electoral mobilization. We also demonstrate how electoral campaigns serve as accountability mechanisms by bringing representatives and constituents face-to-face to engage in meaningful dialogue and deliberation – or at the very least, "see" the shortcomings of government performance.

Finally, we provide a nuanced analysis of the role incumbency plays in African politics. While most studies of African politics emphasize the role incumbency plays in maintaining clientelism and ethnic politics, we find that the governing process offers important modes of communication and positions of strength unavailable to opposition candidates. While this is commonly understood in the American politics literature – e.g., the "rally-around-the-flag effect" – the same is understudied in African leaders. Focusing on the social embeddedness of elections provides a framework for understanding the social and institutional conditions of political mobilization.

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Appendix A

H1: Campaigns are more likely to target swing constituencies (2016_VoteMargin <15).

H2: Campaigns are more likely to target bigger constituencies (2020_RegisteredVoters).

These are Poisson regression models which model changes in the expected number of events in a constituency given that it is a swing constituency (H1) and/or its size (H2)

	Model 1	Model 2
registered_voters_2020	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.000)	(0.000)
swing_constituency		0.026
		(0.097)
Num.Obs.	275	275
R2	0.099	0.099
R2 Adj.	0.067	0.065
R2 Within	0.031	0.031
R2 Within Adj.	0.029	0.027
RMSE	1.50	1.50
Std.Errors	by: Region	by: Region
FE: Region	X	X

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

H3: Campaigns are more likely to target core constituencies (2016_VoteMargin >15 and 2016_Victor) with rallies.

Models 1 & 2 are Poisson models which predict the expected count of events given that they are a core constituency. Models 3 & 4 are linear probability (OLS with binary outcome) models which show changes in the probability that a constituency has a stop given that it is a core constituency.

	Model 1 (NPP – all stop types)	**Model 2 (NDC – all stop types)**	**Model 3 (NPP – Rally)**	**Model 4 (NDC – Rally)**
core_constituency	−0.096	−0.033	0.162	−0.084
	(0.105)	(0.122)	(0.097)	(0.082)
registered_voters_2020	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	152	121	152	123
R2	0.074	0.135	0.186	0.352
R2 Adj.	0.027	0.063	0.109	0.247
R2 Within	0.025	0.034	0.042	0.095
R2 Within Adj.	0.017	0.023	0.028	0.078
RMSE	1.46	1.51	0.45	0.30
Std.Errors	by: Region	by: Region	by: Region	by: Region
FE: Region	X	X	X	X

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

H4: Campaigns are more likely to target swing constituencies (2016_VoteMargin <15) with Official_Business, Courtesy, or Interaction.

Linear probability model

	Model 1
swing_constituency	0.084
	(0.082)
registered_voters_2020	0.000*
	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	123
R2	0.352
R2 Adj.	0.247
R2 Within	0.095
R2 Within Adj.	0.078
RMSE	0.30
Std.Errors	by: Region
FE: Region	X

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

H5: Campaigns are more likely to target core constituencies (2016_VoteMargins >15 + 2016_Victor) with Courtesy or Interaction.

linear probability models

	Model 1 Courtesy call (NPP)	**Model 2 Courtesy call (NDC)**	**Model 3 Interaction (NPP)**	**Model 4 Interaction (NDC)**
core_constituency	−0.056	0.086	−0.092	0.008
	(0.079)	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.095)
registered_voters_2020	0.000**	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	152	123	152	123
R2	0.153	0.177	0.116	0.227
R2 Adj.	0.073	0.044	0.033	0.102
R2 Within	0.059	0.028	0.021	0.021
R2 Within Adj.	0.045	0.010	0.007	0.002
RMSE	0.43	0.42	0.46	0.44
Std.Errors	by: Region	by: Region	by: Region	by: Region
FE: Region	X	X	X	X

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

H6: Incumbents are more likely to target swing constituencies (2016_VoteMargin <15) with Official_Business.

Linear probability models. The interaction is_incumbent × swing_constituency shows the combined effect of being both a constituency held by the incumbent and a swing constituency on the probability of having an official business stop. But the interactions are not significant.

	Model 1 (2020)	**Model 2 (2016)**
is_incumbent	−0.009	−0.014
	(0.053)	(0.021)
swing_constituency	0.057	−0.004
	(0.121)	(0.026)
registered_voters_2020	0.000***	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)
is_incumbent × swing_constituency	−0.068	0.003
	(0.103)	(0.022)
Num.Obs.	275	275
R2	0.183	0.048
R2 Adj.	0.122	−0.023
R2 Within	0.070	0.001
R2 Within Adj.	0.055	−0.015
RMSE	0.41	0.16
Std.Errors	by: Region	by: Region
FE: Region	X	X

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

H7: Incumbents are more likely to have Official_Business.

Linear probability models.

	Model 1 (2020)	**Model 2 (2016**
is_incumbent_2020	−0.050	−0.013
	(0.077)	(0.016)
registered_voters_2020	0.000***	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	275	275
R2	0.182	0.048
R2 Adj.	0.128	−0.015
R2 Within	0.068	0.001
R2 Within Adj.	0.061	−0.007
RMSE	0.41	0.16
Std.Errors	by: Region	by: Region
FE: Region	X	X

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

H8: John Mahama is not more likely to visit his ethnic homeland.

H9: Nana Akufo-Addo is not more likely to visit his ethnic homeland.

	Model 1 (Mahama - Poisson)	**Model 2 (Mahama - LPM)**	**Model 3 (Addo - Poisson**	**Model 4 (Addo – LMP)**
(Intercept)	−0.568***	0.415***	−0.983***	0.200***
	(0.146)	(0.067)	(0.148)	(0.068)
ethnjc_homeland	0.122	−0.118	0.254	0.127
	(0.418)	(0.185)	(0.194)	(0.090)
registered_voters_2020	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Num.Obs.	275	275	275	275
R2	0.018	0.041	0.076	0.093
R2 Adj.	0.012	0.033	0.071	0.086
RMSE	0.92	0.48	1.16	0.48
Std.Errors	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero

* p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

List of Core and swing constituencies

NPP Core	NDC Core	Swing
Akrofuom	Sekyere Afram Plains	New Edubiase
Afigya Sekyere East	Kintampo North	Ahafo Ano North
Odotobiri	Sene East	Ahafo Ano South East
Bosome Freho	Afram Plains South	Ejura Sekyedumase
Manso Adubia	Yilo Krobo	Offinso North
Asante Akim North	Ayawaso East	Asunafo North
Asante Akim South	Shai Osudoku	Asunafo South
Atwima Mponua	Sege	Asutifi North
Atwima Nwabiagya South	Bole Bamboi	Atebubu Amantin
Bosomtwe	Yapei Kusawgu	Jaman North
Juaben	Salaga South	Kintampo South
Asokwa	Sawla Tuna-Kalba	Nkoranza North
Afigya Kwabre South	Tamale South	Pru West
Obuasi West	Kumbungu	Tain
Nsuta Kwamang-Beposo	Mion	Techiman North
Berekum East	Bolgatanga Central	Abura Asebu-Kwamankese
Dormaa East	Bongo	Ajumako Enyan-Esiam
Jaman South	Builsa North	Asikuma Odoben-Brakwa
Sunyani West	Garu	Assin North
Tano North	Chiana Paga	Awutu Senya East
Agona West	Talensi	Cape Coast South
Assin South	Jirapa	KEEA
Hermang Lower Denkyira	Lawra	Mfantseman
Upper Denkyira East	Daffiama Bussie-Issa	Asuogyaman
Nsawam Adoagyiri	Wa West	Fanteakwa North
Atiwa East	Wa Central	Upper Manya Krobo
Ofoase Ayirebi	Ho West	Madina
Akim Swedru	Akatsi North	Yunyoo
Abuakwa North	Afadjato South	Nalerigu Gambaga
Kade	Biakoye	Gushegu
Mpraeso	Akan	Karaga
Nkawkaw	Keta	Wulensi
New Juaben North	Ketu North	Chereponi
Lower West Akim	Kpando	Savelugu
Bimbilla	Krachi East	Daboya Mankarigu
Ahanta West	Nkwanta North	Walewale
Bibiani Anhwiaso-Bekwai	North Tongu	Zabzugu

Takoradi
Tarkwa Nsuaem
Mpohor
Kwesimintsim
Effia
Essikado Ketan
Sekondi
Assin Central
Effutu
Upper Denkyira West
Weija Gbawe
Tema Central
Tema West
Ablekuma West
Anyaa Sowutuom
Trobu
Ablekuma North
Okaikwei South
Okaikwei Central
Dome Kwabenya
Abetifi
Atiwa West
Abirem
Fanteakwa South
Abuakwa South
New Juaben South
Okere
Suhum
Ayensuano
Akwapem North
Akwapem South
Asene Akroso-Manso
Akim Oda
Achiase
Adansi Asokwa
Fomena
Bekwai
Atwima Kwanwoma
Ejisu
Nhyiaeso
South Dayi
South Tongu
Bia East
Juaboso
Bia West
Bodi
Suaman
Ada
Ningo Prampram
Domeabra Obom
Ashaiman
Odododiodioo
Ayawaso North
Anlo
Ketu South
Akatsi South
Central Tongu
Adaklu
Agotime Ziope
Ho Central
North Dayi
Hohoe
Krachi Nchumuru
Nkwanta South
Buem
Afram Plains North
Sene West
Pru East
Damongo
Salaga North
Tamale Central
Sagnarigu
Tamale North
Builsa South
Nabdam
Bolgatanga East
Binduri
Pusiga
Nadowli Kaleo
Nandom
Bawku Central
Zebilla
Sissala East
Sissala West
Wa East
Krachi West
Aowin
Jomoro
Wassa East
Ellembelle
Sefwi Akontombra
Amenfi East
Amenfi Central
Prestea Huni Valley
Sefwi Wiawso
Amenfi West
Evalue Ajomoro-Gwira
Shama
Cape Coast North
Twifo Atii Morkwaa
Agona East
Gomoa East
Awutu Senya West
Gomoa West
Ekumfi
Gomoa Central
Kpone Katamanso
Tema East
Adenta
Bortianor Ngleshie Amanfro
Amasaman
Ablekuma Central
Korle Klottey
Ablekuma South
Krowor
Okaikwei North
Ayawaso West Wuogon
Dadekotopon
Ledzokuku
Ayawaso Central

Subin	Lambussie Karni	Akwatia
Oforikrom		Lower Manya Krobo
Kwadaso		Upper West Akim
Bantama		Asawase
Old Tafo		Asutifi South
Suame		Dormaa West
Manhyia North		Dormaa Central
Manhyia South		Banda
Effiduase Asokore		Techiman South
Asante Akim Central		Nkoranza South
Kumawu		Wenchi
Kwabre East		Tatale Sanguli
Afigya Kwabre North		Yendi
Mampong		Tolon
Offinso South		Nanton
Atwima Nwabiagya North		Yagaba Kubori
Manso Nkwanta		Saboba
Ahafo Ano South West		Bunkpurugu
Obuasi East		Kpandai
Sunyani East		Navrongo Central
Berekum West		Tempane

Appendix B

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