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PARTY CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES IN GHANA: RALLIES, CANVASSING AND HANDOUTS

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ABSTRACT

Political parties use different methods—such as holding rallies, door-to-door canvassing, and distributing gifts—to mobilize voters during election campaigns across Africa. But how do parties choose which approach to use in each constituency? We propose that parties prefer to hold rallies in core constituencies, and to use targeted strategies—canvassing and handouts—in swing and opposition districts. However, opposition parties may not have sufficient resources to pursue such a strategy. Ruling parties have the dual advantage of being in a strong financial position, and having the ability to target core voters with state benefits between elections. Using post-election survey data from Ghana's 2012 election, we show that the ruling party canvassed the most in districts where they were electorally weak and concentrated rallies in their home constituencies. In contrast, the opposition party focused all of its efforts in its home districts. The results highlight how incumbency status shapes parties' campaign behaviour. They also suggest that ruling parties can combine core and swing voter targeting in different stages of the electoral cycle.

WHAT CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES DO POLITICAL PARTIES USE IN AFRICA'S DEMOCRACIES? This question is important for our understanding of

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multi-party elections. If parties rely predominantly on handouts or voter intimidation to sway voters, elections may fail to produce accountable governments. Furthermore, if incumbent parties enjoy significant advantages, or if opposition parties are only able to campaign in specific locations, elections may not generate robust political competition and public trust in democratic institutions. In short, 'how' and 'where' political parties campaign has critical implications for the long-term viability and consolidation of third-wave democracies.

Much of the literature on elections in Africa has focused on understanding the drivers of vote choice. These studies have examined the attributes of politicians,[1] their performance,[2] and the messages that parties espouse.[3] Less research has empirically investigated parties' 'ground game': the methods they use to campaign, and how these methods vary across constituencies. The few studies that have been conducted in this area disproportionately concentrate on vote buying[4] and electoral violence,[5] and often consider these methods in isolation. However, observers of elections know that less nefarious tactics, such as holding rallies and household canvassing, are also widespread.[6] We thus currently lack a holistic picture of how parties allocate resources to different campaign methods—their

1. Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and ethnic politics in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005).
2. Karen Ferree, 'Explaining South Africa's racial census', *Journal of Politics* 68,4 (2006), pp. 803–815; Keith R. Weghorst and Staffan I. Lindberg, 'What drives the swing voter in Africa?', *American Journal of Political Science* 57, 3 (2013), pp. 717–743; Elizabeth Carlson, 'Ethnic voting and accountability in Africa: A choice experiment in Uganda', *World Politics* 67, 2 (2015), pp. 353–385.
3. Leonard Wantchekon, 'Clientelism and voting behavior: Evidence from a field experiment in Benin', *World Politics* 55, 3 (2003), pp. 399–422; Jaimie Bleck and Nicolas van de Walle, 'Valence issues in African elections: Navigating uncertainty and the weight of the past', *Comparative Political Studies* 46, 11 (2013), pp. 1394–1421.
4. Michael Bratton, 'Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns', *Electoral Studies* 27, 4 (2008), pp. 621–32; Paul Nugent, 'Banknotes and symbolic capital: Ghana's elections under the fourth republic', in G. Basedua, M. Erdmann and A. Mehler (eds), *Votes, money and violence: Political parties and elections in Sub-Saharan Africa* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville, 2007), pp. 253–275. Eric Kramon, *Money for votes: The causes and consequences of electoral clientelism in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2018).
5. Paul Collier and Pedro C. Vicente, 'Votes and violence: evidence from a field experiment in Nigeria', *The Economic Journal* 124, 574 (2014), pp. 327–355; James A. Robinson and Ragnar Torvik, 'The real swing voter's curse', *The American Economic Review* 99, 2 (2009), pp. 310–315; Scott Straus and Charlie Taylor, 'Democratization and electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990-2008', in Dorina A. Bekoe (ed.), *Voting in Fear: Electoral Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa* (United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, 2012), pp. 15–38.
6. Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, 'Electoral campaigns as learning opportunities: Lessons from Uganda', *African Affairs* 115, 460 (2016), pp. 516–540; Jeremy Horowitz, 'The ethnic logic of campaign strategy in diverse societies theory and evidence from Kenya', *Comparative Political Studies* 49, 3 (2016), pp. 324–356; Dan Paget, 'The rally-intensive campaign: A distinct form of electioneering in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond', *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24, 4 (2019), pp. 444–464.

'portfolio'—and how these portfolios vary by party type and across local political contexts.

This study addresses this gap by studying the campaign strategies used by Ghana's two major parties during the 2012 elections. We analyse the results of an original survey of voters to investigate party activity. The survey was conducted immediately following the presidential and parliamentary elections, which promotes reliable reporting. The survey questions distinguished between the strategies of the ruling party and the main opposition party, which allows us to examine each party's campaign separately, and to assess the extent to which a party's incumbency status influences which campaign strategies it uses in different areas. Perhaps surprisingly, our survey on campaign contact is among the first to make this distinction between parties.[7] We sampled constituencies to produce variation in electoral competition, which we leverage to examine how parties target campaign resources to their core districts, swing districts, and their opponent's core districts.

We find that both parties hold the most rallies in their stronghold constituencies. We attribute this finding to both parties' desire to mobilize core voters *en masse* and to the actions of incumbent Members of Parliament (MPs). Regarding more targeted strategies, we find that the ruling party is most likely to canvass and distribute handouts outside its core constituencies: that is, they target swing and opposition districts with these tactics. The opposition party does the opposite: they canvass and distribute handouts most in their stronghold districts. Thus, the incumbent pursues a more national and broad-based targeting strategy, while the opposition invests most heavily in its core areas of support.

We develop a theoretical framework that can explain this pattern of results. We theorize that campaign strategies vary on two important dimensions: the cost per beneficiary and the projected electoral returns. We map the three modes of campaigning—rallies, household canvassing, and electoral gifts—onto these two dimensions. Targeted strategies like canvassing and handouts are relatively more costly per person targeted than rallies. At the same time, the individualized nature of handouts and canvassing can produce more certain electoral returns. Parties facing budget constraints must decide where to allocate their resources.

The framework also emphasizes two important differences between incumbent and opposition parties. First, ruling parties typically have more to spend on campaigns. Second, ruling parties can distribute benefits to

7. Some rounds of the Afrobarometer survey ask citizens whether parties contacted them during the campaign, but do not ask which party.

their core voters before election campaigns begin.[8] These advantages, we argue, should allow ruling parties to campaign more intensely in swing and opposition areas during the campaign period.

This framework first implies that parties will focus on campaign rallies in constituencies where they are already electorally strong. Because they can be relatively confident of electoral support in these areas, parties will prefer a strategy that can reach a larger number of voters at a lower per-person cost. By contrast, parties will prefer to use targeted strategies with more certain electoral returns outside of their strongholds. However, due to incumbency advantages, only the ruling party may be able to pursue this more broad-based strategy.

Our paper makes three contributions to the literature. First, by examining multiple campaign strategies in a single election, we present a detailed picture of campaigns in African democracies. Although canvassing and rallies can be venues for clientelism, we show that when party activists canvass, they disseminate information about their party's policies. These results add nuance to existing debates about whether elections in African democracies are clientelistic or programmatic[9] by suggesting that parties engage in both types of strategies. We also display the benefit of studying multiple strategies at once: had we focused exclusively on rallies or canvassing, we would have reached a different conclusion about parties' targeting strategies.

Second, our findings suggest that parties do not pursue either a 'core' or 'swing' targeting strategy. Because ruling parties can target their core districts during their term in office, they can concentrate on swing and opposition districts during the campaign period. These findings advance the distributive politics literature, which has focused on the question of whether parties target core or swing areas—often with mixed results.[10] Our analysis suggests that parties target different types of constituencies at different times in the electoral cycle.

8. Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, Federico Estévez, and Beatriz Magaloni, *The political logic of poverty relief: Electoral strategies and social policy in Mexico* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2016); Noah L. Nathan, *Electoral politics and Africa's urban transition: Class and ethnicity in Ghana* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2018).

9. Danielle Resnick, 'Opposition parties and the urban poor in African democracies', *Comparative Political Studies* 45, 11 (2012), pp. 1351–1378; Charles Fernandes Taylor, 'Ethnic politics and election campaigns in contemporary Africa: Evidence from Ghana and Kenya', *Democratization* 24, 6 (2017), pp. 951–969.

10. Rafael Franck and Ilia Rainer, 'Does the leader's ethnicity matter? Ethnic favoritism, education and health in sub-Saharan Africa', *American Political Science Review* 106, 2 (2012), pp. 294–325; Miriam A. Golden and Brian Min, 'Distributive politics around the world', *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (2013), pp. 73–99; Kimuli Kasara, 'Tax me if you can: Ethnic geography, democracy, and the taxation of agriculture in Africa', *American Political Science Review* 101, 1 (2007), pp. 159–172; Eric Kramon and Daniel N. Posner, 'Who benefits from distributive politics? How the outcome one studies affects the answer one gets', *Perspectives on Politics* 11, 2 (2013), pp. 461–474.

Third, we highlight how resource imbalances translate into differences in the campaigns that ruling parties and opposition parties are able to conduct. Although it is not surprising that the ruling party has an incumbency advantage,[11] our contribution is to highlight one important and understudied channel through which this advantage manifests itself.

Below, we begin by theorizing the costs and benefits of different modes of campaigning. In the following section, we discuss Ghana's political landscape and election campaigns. We then present information on the post-election survey that we conducted in Ghana in 2012. We analyse data from this survey in the next section and display the results of our analysis. After this, we discuss the implications of our results for electoral politics in Ghana. Our final section suggests avenues for further research and concludes.

Explaining party campaign strategies

Despite the burgeoning literature on political behaviour and vote choice in Africa, relatively few studies have empirically assessed the mode through which politicians impart their messages to voters, and how parties distribute their campaign efforts across constituencies. Indeed, in a recent review of research on African campaigns, Dan Paget notes that 'the ground campaign has received little academic attention in sub-Saharan Africa to date'.[12] This neglect of parties' ground game arises, at least in part, because it is difficult to gather data on parties' campaign footprints. Such data need to be both fine-grained and relatively vast, covering voters who reside in a number of constituencies.

Surveys such as the Afrobarometer can provide insights into campaigns, but these surveys are often not timed around elections, which can lead to unreliable reporting. Scholars have conducted their own surveys—of both voters[13] and party brokers[14]—to investigate campaign contact. These surveys suggest that African parties prioritize three activities during campaigns: rallies, household canvassing, and distributing gifts to voters.

11. Leonardo R. Arriola, 'Capital and opposition in Africa: Coalition building in multiethnic societies', *World Politics* 65, 2 (2013), pp. 233–272; Lise Rakner and Nicolas Van de Walle, 'Opposition weakness in Africa', *Journal of Democracy* 20, 3 (2009), pp. 108–121.
12. Dan Paget, 'Election campaigns and political mobilization in Africa', in William R. Thompson (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2019), p. 19.
13. Conroy-Krutz, 'Electoral campaigns as learning opportunities'; Nathan, *Electoral politics and Africa's urban transition: Class and ethnicity in Ghana*; Horowitz, 'The ethnic logic of campaign strategy in diverse societies'; Jeremy Horowitz, 'Ethnicity and the swing vote in Africa's emerging democracies: Evidence from Kenya', *British Journal of Political Science* 49, 3 (2017), pp. 901–921.
14. Sarah Brierley and Noah Nathan, 'The connections of party brokers', *Journal of Politics* (Forthcoming).

Rallies are ubiquitous during campaigns in most African countries. In Tanzania, about three quarters of the population attended a rally during the 2015 election campaign.[15] In Uganda, over 60 percent of the population attended at least one party rally before the 2011 election; between them, the eight presidential candidates held nearly 1,000 official public meetings or rallies, an average of 8.8 per district.[16] In Kenya, an estimated 42 percent of sampled respondents attended at least one campaign rally during the 2016 elections.[17] Household canvassing is also common. In Uganda, over three-fifths (61 percent) of respondents surveyed by Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz reported that a party representative had visited their home in the run-up to the 2011 election. In comparison, roughly 10 percent of Kenyans were visited by party agents at their homes during the campaign in 2016.[18] While more research has been conducted on electoral handouts,[19] the share of the population that receives handouts is usually lower than the percentage that reports being canvassed or attending a rally. Even in Kenya, where handouts are quite common, fewer than one-third of the population receives gifts from parties.[20]

We consider how parties—as national institutions—allocate resources across constituencies. However, we recognize that where presidential and parliamentary elections are held concurrently, campaigns are the product of actions taken by parties and candidates at both levels.

Rallies, handouts and canvassing vary on two important dimensions: the cost per beneficiary (cost) and the expected electoral return (efficacy).[21] Figure 1 displays how these methods map onto these two scales. The cost per beneficiary is partly a function of how many voters parties can target at once. Distributing handouts to individual votes is often expensive due to the transaction costs associated with effectively targeting core voters,[22] which is in addition to the cost of any benefit given. Rallies are cheaper per

15. Paget, 'The rally-intensive campaign'.
16. Conroy-Krutz, 'Electoral campaigns as learning opportunities'.
17. Horowitz, 'Ethnicity and the swing vote in Africa's emerging democracies'.
18. Ibid.
19. See Bratton, 'Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns'; Pedro C. Vicente, 'Is vote buying effective? Evidence from a field experiment in West Africa', *The Economic Journal* 124, 574 (2014), pp. 356–387; Kramon, *Money for votes*.
20. Eric J. Kramon, 'Electoral handouts as information: Explaining unmonitored vote buying', *World Politics* 68, 3 (2016), pp. 454–498.
21. By highlighting these differences, this framework is akin to the model in Magaloni et al. (2007), who emphasize similar differences between private and public goods provision. See Beatriz Magaloni, Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, and Federico Estévez, 'Clientelism and portfolio diversification: A model of electoral investment with applications to Mexico', in Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson (eds), *Patrons, clients, and policies: Patterns of democratic accountability and political competition* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007), pp. 182–205.
22. Ibid.

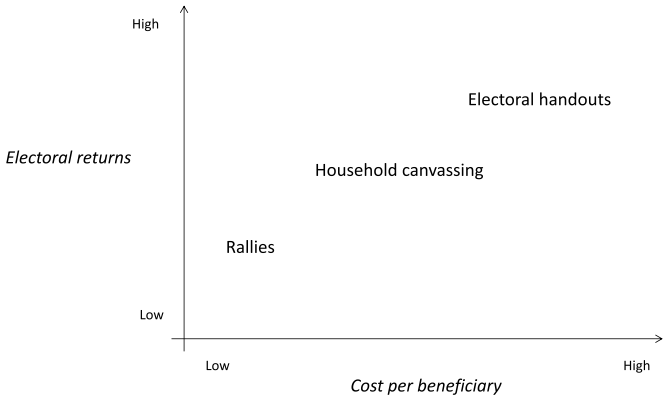

Figure 1 Comparison of campaign strategies.
Source: Authors.

beneficiary than handouts because they do not involve individual targeting, and parties can meet with hundreds, or thousands, of voters at once. Household canvassing lies between the two: it often entails some targeting but does not always involve the distribution of gifts.

The certainty of electoral returns is a function of the extent to which a campaign method is direct and personalized versus non-direct and impersonal. This assumption builds on a vast literature on voter mobilization, which demonstrates that personalized outreach is more effective at mobilizing voters than indirect methods.[23] The personal and direct nature of canvassing and handouts generates more certain electoral payoffs. Indeed, canvassing has been shown to increase turnout across a variety of settings.[24] Research on campaign handouts suggests that this is also an effective way to mobilize support.[25] By comparison, rallies are indirect, and the electoral returns are less certain. Parties facing budget constraints think strategically about how they allocate resources. While a party might like to offer handouts to a majority of voters, in practice, they usually cannot afford to do this. We propose that parties construct a portfolio of campaign contact: they use different methods in different types of constituencies.

23. Melissa R. Michelson and David W. Nickerson, 'Voter mobilization', in James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski and Arthur Lupia (eds), *Cambridge handbook of experimental political science* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011), pp. 228–242.
24. Alan S. Gerber and Donald P. Green, 'The effects of canvassing, telephone calls, and direct mail on voter turnout: A field experiment', *The American Political Science Review* 94, 3 (2000), pp. 653–663; Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, 'Get out the vote: How to increase voter turnout' (Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2008).
25. Kramon, 'Electoral handouts as information: Explaining unmonitored vote buying'.

In addition to considering the cost and efficacy of different methods (Figure 1), we argue that a party's overall campaign strategy is shaped by whether it is a ruling or opposition party. Ruling parties have a critical advantage over opposition parties because they can provide benefits to voters to win their support before the campaign period has officially begun. This affects where (and how) ruling parties campaign.

Parties will concentrate cost-effective strategies such as rallies in constituencies where they are already electorally strong in order to contact as many voters as possible with their limited budget. Parties do not need to worry about using targeted strategies in core districts, because most voters there support them. While the electoral returns on rallies are less certain than canvassing and handouts, rallies are likely to be effective at delivering votes in core constituencies because in these areas voters are predisposed to support the party and may only need a gentle nudge to remind them to turn out. Finally, parties are more likely to hold rallies in their stronghold constituencies than elsewhere as they can rely on the organizational capacities of incumbent MPs, who will hold their own rallies as well as organize rallies on behalf of their party's presidential candidate.

Ruling parties are especially likely to rely on rallies to mobilize support in core constituencies. They can offer individual and community benefits to voters in core constituencies before the campaign officially begins. There is evidence that presidents channel public goods and resources to areas where their ethnic and partisan supporters are concentrated.[26] For example, Ryan Briggs finds that incumbent parties in Ghana have disproportionately provided access to electricity to their stronghold districts.[27] Parties also concentrate private benefits, such as jobs and loans, to core supporters.[28] Targeting core voters with private benefits and club goods reduces the risk of defection and keeps core voters loyal to the party.[29] Because the ruling party can target state resources to build support before the electoral period, they are under less pressure than opposition parties to use direct methods in core constituencies during campaigns.

Parties have an incentive to use costlier and more direct methods of campaigning—like canvassing and handouts—outside their core constituencies. These methods allow parties to target their core supporters without wasting resources on backers of the opposition. Parties need to mobilize their own supporters in both opposition and swing constituencies

26. Franck and Rainer, 'Does the leader's ethnicity matter?
27. Ryan C. Briggs, 'Electrifying the base? Aid and incumbent advantage in Ghana', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 50, 4 (2012), pp. 603–624.
28. Nathan, *Electoral politics and Africa's urban transition: Class and ethnicity in Ghana*.
29. Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni, *The political logic of poverty relief: Electoral strategies and social policy in Mexico*.

because core supporters in these constituencies may be tempted to vote for an opposing party.[30]

While both opposition and ruling parties have equal incentives to use canvassing and handouts in swing and opposition constituencies, it may be that only the ruling party has the resources to do so. Targeted mobilization often relies on networks of party activists. Ruling parties are almost always richer than opposition parties.[31] Incumbent parties can offer greater upfront benefits to party activists, and their promises of post-election benefits may appear more credible.[32] As a party's pool of activists is smaller in opposition and swing constituencies, workers can demand higher prices for their activism. The ruling party can use its additional resources to pay (or promise to pay in the future) party activists to campaign in these areas.

There is qualitative evidence that ruling parties campaign heavily in constituencies outside of their party strongholds. For example, Ghana's New Patriotic Party (NPP) exploited its incumbency advantage to campaign in the opposition's stronghold (Volta Region) during the 2008 election campaign. It was noted that 'apart from the usual distribution of large numbers of t-shirts, they provided schoolbooks in the villages, traditional presents to the chiefs and also cash as an incentive to vote for the right candidate'.[33] Heightened ruling-party activism outside stronghold regions is consistent with data from across Africa that shows that electoral support for opposition parties is more geographically confined than for incumbent parties.[34]

In summary, this framework implies that parties (particularly ruling parties) will prefer to hold rallies in their core constituencies and focus on canvassing and handouts in swing and opposition areas. Finally, we note that this theoretical discussion treats rallies, canvassing, and handouts as distinct strategies. In practice, parties can combine these strategies: they can distribute handouts at rallies or give gifts to voters in their homes. However, decisions about whether or not to distribute handouts are likely to be secondary to those about where to hold a rally or canvass. Therefore, it remains helpful to first think about where parties would prefer to engage in these actions as separate strategies.

30. Nahomi Ichino and Noah L. Nathan, 'Crossing the line: Local ethnic geography and voting in Ghana', *American Political Science Review* 107, 2 (2013), pp. 344–361.
31. Leonardo Rafael Arriola, *Multi-ethnic coalitions in Africa: Business financing of opposition election campaigns* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012).
32. Wantchekon, 'Clientelism and Voting Behavior'; George M. Bob-Milliar, 'Political party activism in Ghana: Factors influencing the decision of the politically active to join a political party', *Democratization* 19, 4 (2012), pp. 668–689.
33. Heinz Jockers, Dirk Kohnert and Paul Nugent, 'The successful Ghana election of 2008: A convenient myth?', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, 1 (2010), pp. 95–115, 108.
34. Michael Wahman, 'Nationalized incumbents and regional challengers opposition- and incumbent-party nationalization in Africa', *Party Politics* 23, 3 (2015), pp. 309–322.

Canvassing, handouts, and rallies in Ghana

Ghana is an appropriate case as it has three key features. First, campaigning is typically done face-to-face via rallies or canvassing.[35] Second, there is always a significant disparity in resources between the ruling party and the major opposition party. The ruling party in Ghana is strengthened fiscally by the control it has over the national bureaucracy, as well as over every local government.[36] Ruling parties can capture campaign finance by mismanaging state processes, particularly through corruption in public procurement.[37] Third, the country's majoritarian electoral system incentivizes parties to attract votes from across the country. These three features—face-to-face campaigning, resource disparities, and a majoritarian electoral system—provide the scope conditions for our theory. We expect the theory to extend to other democracies that share these three features, all of which are quite common across Africa.[38]

Ghana has held multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections every four years since its return to democratic rule in 1992. Along with a growing number of African countries, it has experienced three democratic transitions of power (in 2000, 2008, and 2016). Two parties dominate electoral politics, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the NPP. We focus on the December 2012 election, when the NDC was the incumbent party and the NPP was the primary challenger. The NDC won this election, securing both the presidency and a majority of seats in parliament.

Presidential candidates need an absolute majority to win an election, which, combined with Ghana's history of highly competitive races, incentivizes parties to seek votes from across the country.[39] Accordingly, both major parties have a national character, and draw support from 'all geographic constituencies, encapsulating different groups, socio-economic backgrounds and perspectives'.[40] Yet both main parties have areas of historic electoral dominance that coincide with ethnic alliances.[41] While

35. George M. Bob-Milliar, 'Party youth activists and low-intensity electoral violence in Ghana: A qualitative study of party foot soldier's activism', *African Studies Quarterly* 15, 1 (2014), pp. 125–152; Noah L. Nathan, 'Does participation reinforce patronage? Policy preferences, turnout, and class in urban Ghana', *British Journal of Political Science* 49, 1 (2019), pp. 229–255.
36. Article 243 of Ghana's 1992 constitution gives the president the authority to appoint of the political head of every local government.
37. Sarah Brierley, 'Unprincipled principals: Co-opted bureaucrats and corruption in Ghana', *American Journal of Political Science* 64, 2 (2020), pp. 209–222.
38. Rakner and Walle, 'Opposition weakness in Africa'.
39. Lindsay Whitfield, '"Change for a better Ghana": Party competition, institutionalization and alternation in Ghana's 2008 elections', *African Affairs* 108, 433 (2009), pp. 621–641.
40. E. Gyimah-Boadi and E. Debrah, 'Political parties and party politics', in Baffour Agyeman-Duah (ed), *Ghana: Governance in the fourth republic* (Digibooks Publishing, Accra, 2008), p. 147.
41. Kevin Fridy, 'The elephant, umbrella, and quarrelling cocks: Disaggregating partisanship in Ghana's fourth republic', *African Affairs* 106, 423 (2007), pp. 281–305.

ex-President J. J. Rawlings popularly referred to the Volta Region as the electoral 'World Bank' of the NDC, the constituencies in the populous Ashanti Region are stronghold areas for the NPP.

Citizens can join either party and serve them in official roles at the local, regional, and national levels. The entry point for grassroots members is polling-station executive positions. Both parties also hold primaries to select presidential and parliamentary candidates, which gives party members direct influence over the composition of national party elites.[42] During campaign periods, the mass party network comes to life. National and then regional and constituency party offices dispatch resources to polling stations, where party executives draw up and execute local campaign plans. Polling station executives then canvass voters, organize community meetings and rallies, and distribute election handouts.[43]

We focus on the three most prevalent party campaign strategies in Ghana: door-to-door canvassing, electoral handouts, and campaign rallies. Party activists often visit potential voters at home to try to win their support.[44] A survey of polling station executives revealed that over 90 percent canvass voters in their homes during campaigns.[45] Party operatives engage in two main activities while canvassing. First, they explain the party's programmes and policies. Second, they distribute gifts to voters. According to round 5 of the Afrobarometer survey, 22 percent of respondents in Ghana said party activists explain the party's plan and policies, and 7 percent reported that they distribute gifts.[46]

One of the major policies that both parties discussed in the 2012 election was the challenger's (NPP's) commitment to making senior high school (SHS) free.[47] NPP billboards displayed the slogan 'Free SHS Now! Not in 20 years. Your vote can make it happen'. Charles Taylor argues that the NPP has run on universal policy platforms—such as free SHS and a national health insurance programme—to attract voters from outside its core Akan base.[48]

42. Nahomi Ichino and Noah L. Nathan, 'Do primaries improve electoral performance? Clientelism and intra-party conflict in Ghana', *American Journal of Political Science* 57, 2 (2013), pp. 428–441.
43. Nugent, 'Banknotes and symbolic Capital: Ghana's elections under the fourth republic'; Brierley and Nathan, 'The connections of party brokers'.
44. Nathan, 'Does participation reinforce patronage? Policy preferences, turnout, and class in urban Ghana'.
45. Brierley and Nathan, 'The connections of party brokers'.
46. Verbatim responses were coded into pre-defined categories. The question was 'In your opinion, which three main activities would you say grassroots political party activists (or foot soldiers) primarily engage themselves in during election campaigns and elections?'
47. Sarah Brierley and George Ofosu, 'The presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana, December 2012', *Electoral Studies* 35 (2014), pp. 382–385. Primary and junior high school are already free in Ghana.
48. Taylor, 'Ethnic politics and election campaigns in contemporary Africa: evidence from Ghana and Kenya'. Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana, comprising 48 percent of the population.

Both major parties distribute electoral handouts to voters during campaigns.[49] These handouts are part of a top-down strategy; voters expect and demand them.[50] According to Afrobarometer data, about 12 percent of Ghanaians were offered a handout during the 2004 elections, and about 7 percent in 2012. Much vote buying in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa occurs in public spaces such as campaign rallies and campaign meetings.[51]

As in other countries in Africa[52] and elsewhere,[53] presidential and parliamentary candidates regularly hold campaign rallies. Ordinary voters and local notables, including traditional chiefs, attend these events, at which politicians take to the stage to discuss their campaign promises and disparage their opponents. Voters are also given t-shirts, handheld fans, and other branded paraphernalia at rallies.

Post-election survey of voters after Ghana's 2012 election

We conducted a large-scale survey of voters in the two days after Ghana's 2012 general elections. Our sample is composed of residents from 4 of Ghana's then 10 regions—Ashanti, Central, Volta, and Western.[54] The timing of the survey facilitates reliable reporting on campaign activities.[55] We selected the study regions because of their varied levels of electoral competition. The Ashanti and Volta Regions are not electorally competitive, while the Central and Western Regions are home to some of Ghana's most competitive constituencies, which contain many voters who are 'up for grabs' in each election.[56] We leverage this variation across constituencies to investigate party campaign strategies across different electoral environments.

49. Staffan I. Lindberg, "'It's our time to chop": Do elections in Africa feed neo-patrimonialism rather than counteract it?', *Democratization* 10, 2 (2003), pp. 121–140; Nugent, 'Banknotes and symbolic capital: Ghana's elections under the fourth republic'.
50. Ghana Center for Democratic Development, Accra, *Educating the public on voting on policy issues: Reducing vote buying in the election 2016*. 2016; Staffan I. Lindberg, 'Have the cake and eat it: The rational voter in Africa',, *Party Politics* 19, 6 (2013), pp. 945–961.
51. Kramon, 'Electoral handouts as information: Explaining unmonitored vote buying'.
52. Horowitz, 'The ethnic logic of campaign strategy in diverse societies theory and evidence From Kenya'; Paget, 'The rally-intensive campaign'.
53. Mariela Szwarcberg, 'Political parties and rallies in Latin America', *Party Politics* 20, 3 (2012), pp. 456–446; Joy Langston and Guillermo Rosas, 'Risky business: Where do presidential campaigns visit?', *Electoral Studies* 55, (2018), pp. 120–130.
54. About half of Ghana's population lives in these four regions.
55. Ghana's election was held on Friday, 7 December 2012, and the results were announced on Sunday night (9 December). The survey was administered on Saturday and Sunday before the announcement. This protects against any form of bias in reporting that may occur after the results are made public.
56. Fridy, 'The elephant, umbrella, and quarrelling cocks: Disaggregating partisanship in Ghana's fourth republic'.

We constructed a random, representative sample of nearly 6,000 citizens who reside in 60 constituencies.[57] The sample includes a mix of competitive and non-competitive constituencies. For the purposes of sampling, we coded a constituency as electorally competitive if the vote margin between the top two presidential candidates was less than 10 percentage points in the prior election (in 2008), and non-competitive otherwise. Using this criterion, a total of 23 constituencies (unevenly distributed throughout all four regions) were classified as competitive. Following the Afrobarometer's approach, we used a random-walk technique to select respondents starting from a pre-specified starting point.[58] The surveys were conducted in English (the country's national language), as well as Akan and Ewe, the two main local languages in the study regions.

We asked respondents a battery of questions about their contact with parties prior to the election. To analyse variation in strategies between different types of parties, we asked these questions separately for each of the two major parties. Many prior surveys on campaign contact asked voters about their experiences with different campaign strategies but not which parties targeted them.

We construct three dependent variables. We use our first two outcome measures—on canvassing and handouts—to provide insights into the operation of the national party's campaign strategy. Our third outcome—on rallies—focuses mainly on the activities of parliamentary aspirants. However, because parliamentary candidates often join rallies held by their party's presidential candidate, this variable also taps into the strategy of the national party. To measure rates of canvassing, we asked respondents whether a party activist visited them at home.[59] The outcome is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 if the party canvassed the respondent and 0 otherwise.

Our second outcome assesses the frequency of handouts. We asked whether voters witnessed any of the parties distributing items in their communities during the campaign. Although we ideally wanted to know which

57. The survey involved roughly 300 survey enumerators who were recruited as part of a larger project that analysed the impact of election-day fraud and violence on election observers. We present those results in Joseph Asunka, Sarah Brierley, Eric Kramon, Miriam Golden, and George Ofosu, 'Electoral fraud or violence: The effect of observers on party manipulation strategies', *British Journal of Political Science* 49, 1 (2019), pp. 129–151. We trained groups of enumerators in each of the four regions in our sample. Due to challenges in data collection immediately after the election, our final dataset contains surveys from 52 of the sampled constituencies.

58. Online Appendix A further describes the sampling procedure.

59. The exact wording of the questions was (1) 'Did any political party agents come to your place of residence to encourage you to vote for their party?' (2) 'Did you witness any of these parties distributing items such as money, food, fertilizer, or cell phones to voters in your area during the election?' and (3) 'Have you seen the candidate for MP of this constituency from the following parties at a rally or any other event during the current elections?'

individuals received gifts from parties, we asked about the respondent's local area in general to guard against response bias. Previous research shows that vote buying is a sensitive topic and that citizens under-report this practice when asked if they received gifts directly.[60] To minimize bias, we therefore follow previous researchers and asked voters whether they had observed vote buying in their area.[61]

Finally, we asked voters whether they had seen the candidate for MP at a rally or campaign event. Again, we coded responses separately for each party to construct two dummy variables, with positive responses taking a value of 1. We acknowledge that this measure relies on the respondent attending the rally or meeting and therefore may not pick up every event that parliamentary candidates held. However, it is not unusual for people to attend rallies held by candidates from both parties, which dispels some concerns about reporting bias.[62] In Online Appendix C, we show that our main results are robust to aggregating the data on rally attendance to the polling station level.

Our regression analyses control for individual- and constituency-level attributes that may predict campaign contact. At the individual level, parties tend to target poorer voters with handouts.[63] We therefore created a poverty index as a composite indicator of respondents' wealth by summing responses to a set of questions about how often respondents go without (i) cash income, (ii) food, (iii) medicine, and (iv) electricity. We also control for gender and level of education, and whether the respondent voted for the NDC in the prior presidential and parliamentary elections (in 2008).

At the constituency level, since campaign strategies may vary across urban and rural areas, we control for whether citizens live in predominantly rural constituencies using data from Ghana's 2010 census. We also use the census data to control for the share of houses with electricity, which we use to proxy for how accessible a constituency is. Finally, we control for overall constituency-level wealth using the share of houses made of natural materials such as earth or wood (as opposed to concrete, which is more expensive). Table 1 displays summary statistics of the dependent and independent variables.

60. Ezequiel Gonzalez-Ocantos, Chad Kiewiet de Jonge, Carlos Meléndez, Javier Osorio and David W. Nickerson, 'Vote buying and social desirability bias: Experimental evidence from Nicaragua', *American Journal of Political Science* 56, 1 (2012), pp. 202–217.
61. Susan C. Stokes, 'Perverse accountability: A formal model of machine politics with evidence from Argentina', *American Political Science Review* 99, 3 (2005), pp. 315–325.
62. Indeed, 64 percent of respondents who participated in a rally attended rallies held by both parties.
63. Bratton, 'Vote buying and violence in Nigerian election campaigns'; Peter Sandholt Jensen and Mogens K. Justesen, 'Poverty and vote buying: Survey-based evidence from Africa', *Electoral Studies* 33 (2014), pp. 220–232.

Table 1 Summary statistics of dependent and independent variables.

Statistic	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*
Constituency-level attributes			
NDC vote share	5861	0.472	0.211
Urban	5968	0.435	0.285
Electricity	5968	0.606	0.190
Housing	5968	0.422	0.217
Individual-level attributes			
Female	5425	0.492	0.500
Poverty index	5231	3.951	2.209
Education	5814	1.075	0.867
NDC voter	5439	0.428	0.495
Dependent variables			
Canvass (NDC)	5478	0.318	0.466
Canvass (NPP)	5801	0.309	0.462
Handout (NDC)	5507	0.134	0.341
Handout (NPP)	5752	0.081	0.273
Rally (NDC)	5458	0.462	0.499
Rally (NPP)	5770	0.454	0.498

Notes: The constituency-level attributes urban, electricity, and housing are taken from Ghana's 2010 Housing and Population Census. 'Housing' refers to houses made of natural materials such as earth or wood. 'Electricity' reports the share of people with an electricity connection. 'Poverty index' is measured on a 0 to 8 scale, with higher numbers representing more poverty. 'Education' is measured on a scale from 0 (no formal education) to 3 (university education). 'NDC voter' is a dummy variable that takes a value of 1 when the respondent voted for NDC candidates in the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Comparison of how and where Ghana's ruling and opposition parties campaigned in 2012

We first present descriptive information on the prevalence of each of the three methods. Figure 2 displays mean levels of canvassing, handouts, and rallies disaggregated by party. Both the ruling party and opposition party canvassed about 30 percent of respondents, while 23 percent of survey participants reported being canvassed by both parties.

Both parties also distributed handouts, although the ruling party has a clear advantage. Overall, 13 percent of respondents indicated that the incumbent party distributed handouts in their community, compared with 8 percent for the opposition party. This difference is equivalent to 62 percent more gifts distributed by the ruling party relative to the opposition. This pattern is consistent with our argument that differential access to financial resources shapes how parties mobilize support. It is also clear that voters are less likely to receive handouts than to be canvassed, which shows that canvassing does not always involve the distribution of gifts.

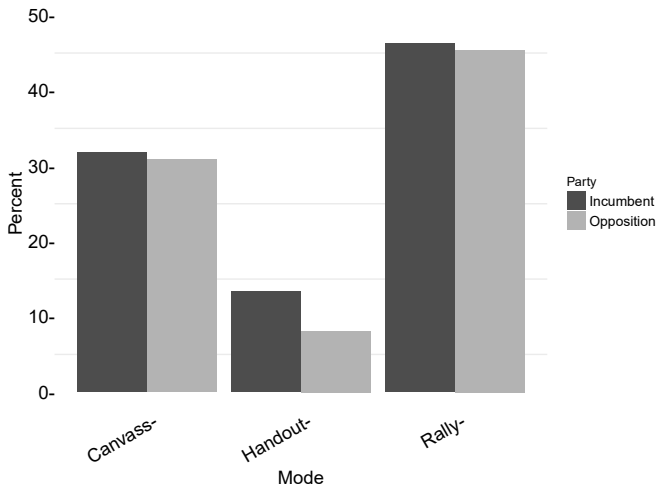

Figure 2 Incumbent and opposition party campaign strategies.

Nearly half of the respondents (45 percent) reported seeing a parliamentary candidate at a rally or event during the campaign. The data suggest that ruling party and opposition party candidates hold roughly equal numbers of rallies: 46 percent of respondents reported seeing an NDC candidate at a rally, and 45 percent reported seeing an NPP candidate at a rally. More than one-third of respondents (35 percent) stated that they saw candidates from both parties.

Figure 3 disaggregates the raw data across different electoral environments. We categorize constituencies as incumbent strongholds, opposition strongholds, or competitive according to each party's vote share in the prior election. We classify constituencies where the NDC won over 65 percent of the vote in 2008 as NDC strongholds (n = 9), and those in which the NPP received 65 percent or more of the vote as NPP strongholds (n = 18). We consider the remaining constituencies to be competitive (n = 25). The far-left plot in Figure 3 displays the results for rallies. The results show that both the ruling party and opposition party held the most rallies in their core constituencies. In the NDC's stronghold constituencies, 52 percent of respondents reported attending an NDC rally, compared with 42 percent in NPP strongholds. Similarly, 42 percent of respondents saw NPP candidates at rallies in their stronghold, compared with 34 percent in constituencies where the ruling party was dominant. These targeting strategies can be partly explained by the behaviour of incumbent MPs. However, because parliamentary candidates often join presidential candidates at their

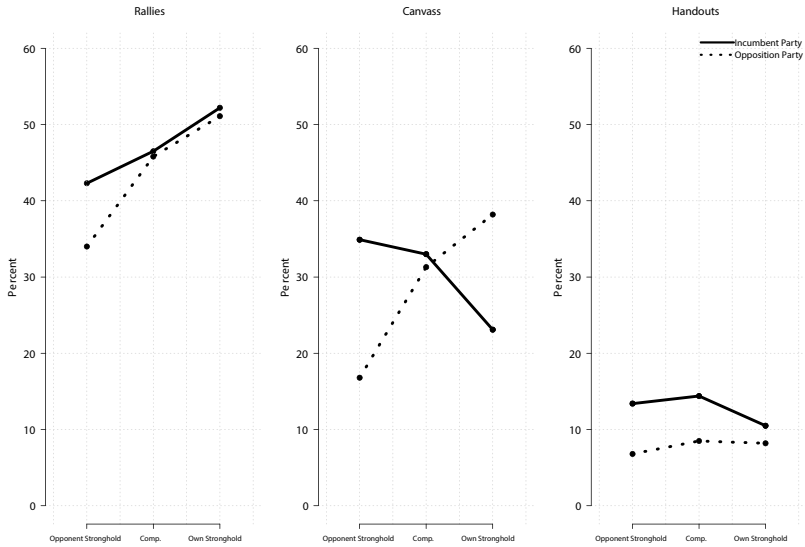

Figure 3 Incumbent and opposition campaign strategies by constituency type (party vote share).
Notes: Incumbent (opposition) strongholds are constituencies where the incumbent party (NDC) received over 65 percent (less than 35 percent) of the vote in the prior election. See Online Appendix Figure B.1 for an alternative classification of constituencies.

rallies, they can also be explained by the strategy of the national party. As our theory suggests, parties have an incentive to invest in rallies in core constituencies because they are a cost-effective way to mobilize large numbers of core supporters.

In contrast to rallies, the ruling party and opposition party pursue divergent targeting strategies with canvassing and handouts. The central plot in Figure 3 displays the results for canvassing. The ruling party (solid line) canvasses the most in opposition constituencies and the least in the party's core constituencies. Indeed, 35 percent of respondents in opposition strongholds were canvassed by the incumbent party, compared with 23 percent in the party's core constituencies (34 percent less). The opposite pattern is true for the challenger (dashed line). While 17 percent of respondents were canvassed by the NPP in opposition constituencies, 38 percent of survey participants from the party's stronghold constituencies reported being visited (124 percent more).

The far-right plot in Figure 3 displays the rates of electoral handouts. We continue to find that the ruling party allocates more campaign resources to

constituencies where they are electorally weak. In opposition strongholds and competitive constituencies, 14 percent of respondents reported that the incumbent party distributes gifts in their community. In ruling party stronghold constituencies, roughly 10 percent of respondents said that gifts are distributed. The difference between these two means is statistically significant (p-value = 0.001).

As before, the opposition party targets handouts differently. They distribute the most handouts in constituencies where they are already electorally dominant. In their strongholds and competitive constituencies, the opposition party distributed gifts to 9 percent of citizens, while in the incumbent party's stronghold, only about 7 percent of citizens received gifts from the opposition. Finally, the plot shows that in every type of constituency, the opposition party distributed fewer gifts than the ruling party.

These results show that the ruling party invests in targeted, direct methods—canvassing and handouts—in opposition and swing constituencies. Parties need to mobilize their core supporters in non-core constituencies because these supporters may be tempted to vote for the opposition.[64] Furthermore, the ruling party can use patronage to satisfy voters in their stronghold constituencies between electoral cycles, which allows them to invest in costly modes of mobilization in opposition districts during the campaign. While the opposition party may also desire to engage in such a strategy, our results suggest that they do not. The opposition may struggle financially to campaign outside their stronghold constituencies. In addition, because they cannot distribute patronage before the campaign begins, they have to use direct methods in stronghold constituencies to retain the loyalty of their core supporters.[65]

For all three campaign methods, the opposition party invests the most in the constituencies where they are already electorally dominant. The results of our regression analyses, which allow us to control for individual- and constituency-level factors that may shape party campaign strategies, are consistent with the patterns we describe above. The results in Tables 2 and 3 are from logistic regressions where the dependent variables take a value of 1 if the respondent attended a rally, was canvassed by, or received a handout from the party in question. The primary independent variable is the party's vote share in the previous election (the NDC when analysing incumbent strategies, and the NPP when analysing the approach of the opposition).

64. Ichino and Nathan, 'Crossing the line'.
65. Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni, *The political logic of poverty relief: Electoral strategies and social policy in Mexico*.

Table 2 Logistic regressions predicting incumbent party campaign contact.

	Incumbent rally		*Incumbent canvass*		*Incumbent handouts*	
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*
NDC vote share (2008)	0.329	0.469*	−0.745***	−1.061***	−0.402	−0.038
	(0.208)	(0.240)	(0.223)	(0.260)	(0.273)	(0.327)
NDC voter		0.170**		0.311***		−0.292
		(0.078)		(0.082)		(0.114)
Education		0.128***		0.078*		0.134
		(0.043)		(0.047)		(0.062)
Female		−0.168***		0.023		0.010
		(0.056)		(0.058)		(0.084)
Poverty index		0.071***		0.038*		0.046
		(0.019)		(0.021)		(0.026)
Constant	0.388	0.059	−0.936	−1.365**	−3.298***	−3.926***
	(0.436)	(0.487)	(0.477)	(0.539)	(0.571)	(0.666)
Constituency controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls		Yes		Yes		Yes
N	5355	3899	5376	3915	5403	3922
Log Likelihood	−3669.518	−2655.617	−3332.143	−2410.621	−2112.951	−1493.928

Notes: Constituency controls are degree of urbanization, share of houses with electricity, and share of houses made of natural materials (earth or wood). Individual controls are education, gender, poverty index, and NDC voter in 2008. Clustered standard errors (polling station level) are in parentheses.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table 3 Logistic regressions predicting opposition party campaign contact.

	Opposition rally		*Opposition canvass*		*Opposition handouts*	
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*
NPP vote share (2008)	1.647***	1.208***	1.917***	1.993***	−0.008	−0.344
	(0.216)	(0.241)	(0.245)	(0.270)	(0.402)	(0.458)
NDC voter		−0.144*		0.183**		0.104
		(0.076)		(0.080)		(0.134)
Education		0.137***		0.092**		0.017
		(0.043)		(0.046)		(0.070)
Female		−0.141***		−0.058		−0.174
		(0.053)		(0.059)		(0.111)
Poverty index		0.038**		0.021		−0.027
		(0.019)		(0.020)		(0.036)
Constant	−1.121***	−0.855**	−2.253 ***	−2.273***	−5.106***	−5.645***
	(0.377)	(0.432)	(0.485)	(0.560)	(0.800)	(0.982)
Constituency controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual controls		Yes		Yes		Yes
N	5641	4069	5669	4092	5628	4072
Log Likelihood	−3821.565	−2766.266	−3391.897	−2453.165	−1555.055	−1064.684

Notes: Constituency controls are degree of urbanization, share of houses with electricity, and share of houses made of natural materials (earth or wood). Individual controls are education, gender, poverty index, and NDC voter in 2008. Clustered standard errors (polling station level) are in parentheses.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table 2 displays the results for the incumbent party. In Columns 1 and 2 rally attendance is the dependent variable. The results display a positive relationship between incumbent party vote share and seeing politicians at rallies. After controlling for individual-level characteristics, this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.10 level. (Column 2). The probability of seeing a candidate at a rally increases by about 7 percentage points when we move from constituencies where only 20 percent of the electorate voted for the incumbent party in the previous election to those in which over 80 percent did so (see Figure 4). In other words, consistent with the descriptive analysis, the ruling party conducts more rallies in stronghold constituencies.

Columns 3 and 4 of Table 2 show that there is a negative and statistically significant relationship between the incumbent party's vote share in the constituency (in 2008) and the probability that a respondent was canvassed by the incumbent party (in 2012). Column 3 controls for constituency-level characteristics that may influence rates of campaign contact. Column 4 adds controls for a host of individual-level factors. The negative relationship remains unchanged. Figure 4 displays the predicted probability of canvassing as a function of each party's vote share in the previous election. In constituencies where the incumbent party received less than 20 percent of the vote in 2008, a citizen has a 40 percent likelihood of being canvassed. This figure drops by 15 percentage points in constituencies where over 80 percent of the population voted for the incumbent in the prior election. In short, the ruling party canvasses more voters in swing and opposition districts.

Columns 5 and 6 of Table 2 present the results on handouts. We do not find a significant relationship between the incumbent party's vote share and the distribution of gifts. However, consistent with the descriptive data, there is a negative correlation between handouts and the incumbent's vote share in the previous election.

Table 2 also provides evidence on the individual-level variables that correlate with incumbent party campaign contact. The incumbent party targets core voters when canvassing. NDC supporters are also more likely than non-supporters to attend the party's rallies. By contrast, NDC voters were less likely to observe handouts from the incumbent being distributed in their communities. Female respondents are no more likely to be canvassed than males, and are less likely to attend rallies. Additionally, individual poverty levels are positively correlated with each of the three dependent variables.

Table 3 presents the same set of analyses for the opposition party. The NPP's constituency-level vote share is also positively associated with rally attendance (Columns 1 and 2). There is a strong and positive relationship between opposition party vote share and the probability of a respondent

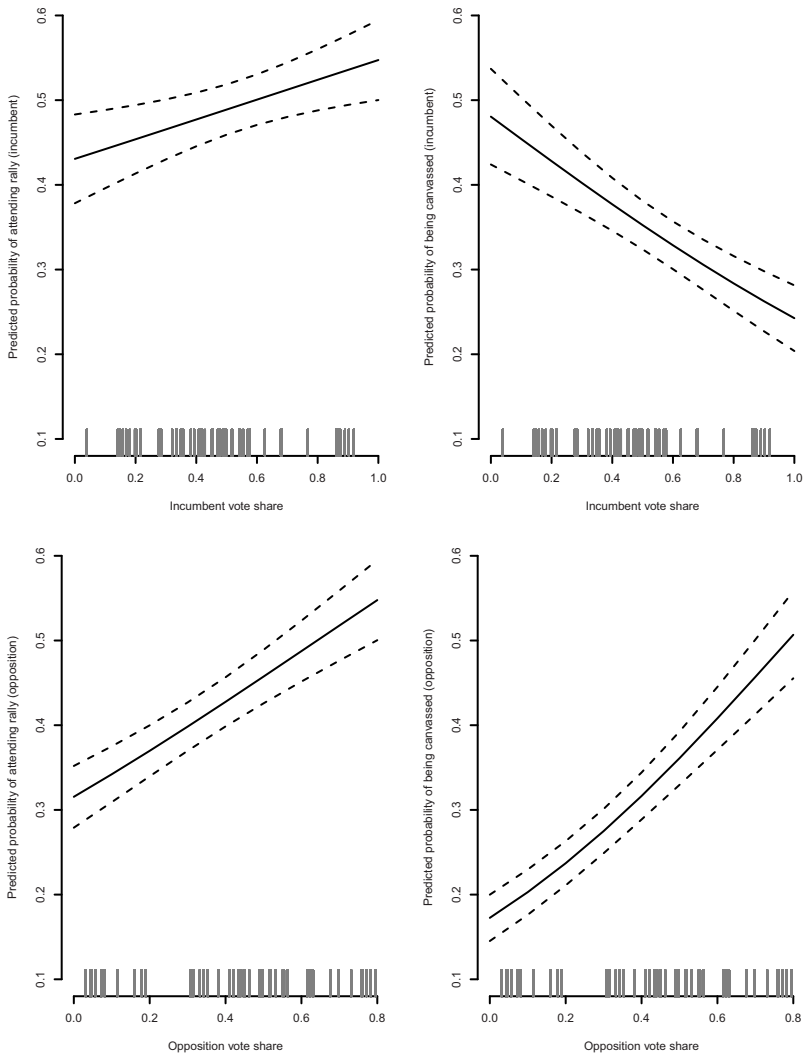

Figure 4 Predicted probabilities of rallies and canvassing by party vote share in the previous election.

Notes: The top panel presents predicted probabilities of canvassing and rallies for incumbent party strategies (Table 2), and the bottom panel presents the same predicted probabilities for the opposition (Table 3). The left plots display results for rallies. The right plots display results for canvassing. The rug above the x-axis on each plot displays the vote shares for each party in the sampled constituencies.

being canvassed (Columns 3 and 4). Thus, the canvassing strategy is the opposite of what we observe for the ruling party; the opposition party canvasses the most in districts where its vote share was higher in the previous election. Again, we do not find a statistically significant relationship between party vote share and the distribution of electoral handouts. In short, the opposition party focuses its rallying and canvassing efforts on its core constituencies.[66]

Incumbency advantages and the geography of election campaigns in Ghana

Accusations of incumbency abuses have been rife in Ghana.[67] Incumbents have created an unlevel playing field at every stage of the electoral cycle. The opposition boycotted the 1992 election due to a bloated voter register and fraud.[68] While outright fraud has declined since then,[69] opposition parties continue to voice disquiet over incumbents' behaviour. For example, ruling parties have used state resources to fund their campaigns: local government offices have been repurposed as campaign centres, and local government vehicles have been seen transporting supporters to rallies.[70] Ruling parties have also got a head start on their campaigns by commissioning the opening of new infrastructure projects just before elections, often with much fanfare.[71]

Perhaps the most important advantage to ruling parties is financial. Incumbent parties use their position to amass wealth by diverting state funds into party coffers through the manipulation of state contracts and kickbacks.[72] Ruling parties in Ghana are also better able to attract funds from the private sector. As Paul Nugent observes, 'Businessmen, most notably road contractors, contributed to the NDC funds in the expectation of winning favourable consideration in the tendering process'.[73]

66. An alternative approach to analysing our survey data is to aggregate the data up to the polling station level. On average, we surveyed four respondents at each polling station in the sample. In such an analysis, the dependent variable takes a value of 1 when any of the respondents from the polling station reported attending in a rally, being canvassed, or seeing handouts being distributed. Our main results remain substantively the same if we adopt this approach. We present these results in Online Appendix C.
67. Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'A peaceful turnover in Ghana', *Journal of Democracy* 12, 2 (2001), pp. 103–117; Paul Nugent, 'Winners, losers and also rans: Money, moral authority and voting patterns in the Ghana 2000 election', *African Affairs* 100, 400 (2001), pp. 405–428; Richard Jeffries. 'The Ghanaian elections of 1996: Towards the Consolidation of Democracy?', *African Affairs* 97, 387 (1998), pp. 189–208.
68. Richard Jeffries and Clare Thomas, 'The Ghanaian elections of 1992', *African Affairs* 92, 368 (1993), pp. 331–366.
69. However, some fraud remains, see Asunka et al., 'Electoral fraud or violence: The effect of observers on party manipulation strategies'.
70. Nugent, 'Winners, losers and also rans'.
71. Gyimah-Boadi, 'A peaceful turnover in Ghana'; Nugent, 'Winners, losers and also rans'.
72. Joseph Luna, *Political finance in developing countries: A case from Ghana* (Routledge, London, 2020); Brierley, 'Unprincipled principals'.
73. Nugent, 'Winners, losers and also rans', p. 409.

Thus the ruling party can offer more funds to its candidates. According to Staffan Lindberg, 62 percent of ruling-party MPs—compared with 5 percent of opposition-party MPs—said the party was their primary source of funding.[74]

Our results highlight the impact of financial superiority on campaign strategies in two ways. First, the ruling party distributed more gifts to voters. While the literature has suggested that the ruling party has historically used its financial might to provide more gifts to voters, our study provides the first empirical evidence that this is indeed the case. Second, financial advantage influences 'where' parties campaign. Our data show that only the ruling party had the financial resources to recruit canvassers in districts where it was not electorally strong.

This study thus provides a corrective to the idea that parties in Ghana are most active in their so-called home regions. In the previous election (in 2008), Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi proposed that parties concentrated their efforts in their respective strongholds.[75] However, we find that the ruling NDC canvassed a larger share of voters in the Ashanti Region in 2012 than any other region in our sample, including in the party's heartland Volta Region. The NDC's activism in Ashanti does not seem unique to the 2012 election: it launched a campaign to increase its vote share there from 610,000 in 2012 to 1 million in 2016. Given that the Ashanti Region is the most populous in Ghana—home to nearly 5 million citizens (19 percent of the total population)—the NDC exploited opportunities in office to make electoral headway in constituencies where they were not already electorally strong.

Our results also show that the NDC invested in rallies in their stronghold constituencies at the same time. Thus, the ruling party implemented a mixed strategy, investing in targeted strategies in opposition and competitive districts, and rallies in its stronghold areas. We argue that the ruling party is able to invest significant campaign resources in opposition constituencies during electoral campaigns because it can target state benefits to core districts ('before') the campaign officially begins. Along similar lines, Noah Nathan documents evidence of parties implementing a mixed strategy in urban Ghana. He argues that 'parties are free to focus on voters outside their core in their final campaign appeals because they have already shored up the support of their ethnic bases prior to the campaign

74. Staffan I. Lindberg, 'What accountability pressures do MPs in Africa face and how do they respond? Evidence from Ghana', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 48, 1 (2010), pp. 117–142. Candidate campaign finance data from Malawi show similar patterns, see Michael Wahman and Merete Seeberg Bech (2020) 'Attracting affluence: A decentralized theory of incumbent party resource advantage with evidence from Malawi', Paper presented at the 'Representation and Elections in Africa Workshop', Aarhus University, 28–29 February 2020.
75. Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, 'Another step forward for Ghana', *Journal of Democracy* 20, 2 (2009), p. 142.

beginning'.[76] Nathan provides numerous examples of core voter targeting between elections, with ruling parties distributing private and club benefits, including civil service jobs, business loans, and public contracts, and public infrastructure such as road tarring and streetlights.

Overall, our study highlights the need to nuance claims about where parties concentrate their campaign efforts. Parties may focus on one mode of campaigning in a particular part of the country, only to invest in another method of campaigning in other types of districts. Our results complement Noah Nathan's work on urban Ghana and extend the logic of inter-temporal core and swing voter targeting as part of parties' national campaign strategies.

Conclusion

This study has investigated party campaign strategies in Ghana. One important nuance of our data is that we asked respondents about their contact with each of Ghana's two major parties—the incumbent and the opposition.

Our analysis produces an important descriptive finding: door-to-door canvassing is extremely widespread. Voters also attend campaign rallies at very high rates. Canvassing and rallies are substantially more prevalent than electoral handouts. While the literature on African politics has emphasized exchange-based or otherwise manipulative campaign strategies, our results imply that parties also generate support by discussing their policies and programmes with citizens. Instead of treating clientelistic and programmatic campaigns as mutually distinct, our results suggest that parties engage in both simultaneously.

The literature on distributive politics has extensively assessed whether politicians seek to predominantly court votes from either core or swing voters. Again, our results suggest that these tactics are not mutually exclusive. We propose that Ghana's ruling party used public resources while in office to distribute club goods and private benefits to core voters to suppress the risk of defection.[77] Shoring up core voters during their term in office allowed the ruling party to dedicate resources to broader groups of voters during the campaign.

We also find that the incumbent party uses a different approach to target rallies than it does for canvassing and handouts: it targets stronghold areas with rallies, and opposition and competitive constituencies with canvassing. This finding differs from Jeremy Horowitz who argues that presidential

76. Nathan, *Electoral politics and Africa's urban transition: Class and ethnicity in Ghana*, p. 185.
77. Diaz-Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni, *The political logic of poverty relief: Electoral strategies and social policy in Mexico*.

candidates in Kenya held more rallies in swing areas in order to avoid appearing that they are favouring their own ethnic constituency.[78] Our results are likely different because we focus on rallies organized by MP candidates. In addition, political parties in Ghana are multi-ethnic in composition, and the country does not have a history of ethnic conflict. Our diverging findings may also reflect differences in the nature of ethnic politics in the two countries. Indeed, our results are consistent with those of Mascha Rauschenbach, who finds that presidential candidates in Ghana targeted their core districts with rallies during the 2012 election.[79]

Our results suggest several avenues for future research. Future distributive politics studies could further investigate the timing of exchanges and consider instances of politicians substituting core and swing voter targeting during different points in the electoral cycle. Future research should also explore how incumbency advantages manifest themselves on the campaign trail. This will be important for our understanding of elections and democratic consolidation in African democracies.

78. Horowitz, 'The ethnic logic of campaign strategy in diverse societies'.
79. Mascha Rauschenbach, 'Mobilizing party supporters: The allocation of campaign rallies in Ghana's 2012 Elections' (Unpublished manuscript, 2017).