**Editor**

* Show that the argument works in earlier elections
* Demonstrate that the theorized mechanism – rewarding rather than punishing of unruly districts – is plausible for all elections
* Discuss the generalizability of the Vietnamese case in the absence of multiparty contestation

**Reviewer 1**

* Change the informational framing
  + Reviewer refer to Rozenas 2015
    - MY RESPONSE: The Rozenas (actually Rozenas 2016, JOP) story assumes the information content of elections shrink as manipulation increases. This is not always the case.
  + MY RESPONSE: reviewer believes that electioneering leads to unusable results that provide no information. Either I should clarify better that electioneering still leads to usable results or change framing. To do the former, explain better that partial electioneering leads to \*better\* information, since it clarifies where the variation in results are coming from. In other words, double down on the informational framing story
* Argument that Vietnam sees no need for a punishment regime is not convincing
  + Reviewer does not see why the difference between rebelling against the incumbent or supporting the opponent matters for punishment vs. placation
    - Reviewer’s own interpretation is that the lack of opposition means that the regime does not feel as threatened, and so does not need to threaten the districts that go to the opposition
      * MY RESPONSE: I should clarify that my point is that there is simply no opposition, so the vote can only be “rebelling against the incumbent.” I should also explain why the regime should not punish “rebelling against the incumbent” but should punish “supporting the opposition.” Maybe because the ultimate goal of the regime is not the votes themselves, so no need to condition behavior to secure just the votes.
    - Reviewer suggests pushing further on a story about hybrid vs. single-party regimes
      * MY RESPONSE: I personally think single-party is not enough, it’s more about the lack of any organized opposition.
* Budget Law passed in 2015 and went into effect in 2016 could explain the effect
  + Reviewer thinks that the budget law could have allowed richer provinces, which also tend to have higher numbers of central candidate losses, to retain more revenues.
    - MY RESPONSE: I should show that the budget law does not allow richer provinces to retain more revenues. In addition I should remind reviewer that the balance test in Table 1 shows the opposite story (no statistical difference between treated and control, raw estimates suggest that provinces with losses are *poorer*).
    - MY RESPONSE: Another way to get around this is to show that the result also applies for the other year
* Transfer shares are negotiated in cycles and thus would be fix for 3-5 years period, and so there should be no shift in the long term.
  + Reviewer thinks that there should be no shift in the long term, but unclear whether this means they disagree with my result (which found long term effect) or misread my result
    - MY RESPONSE: One theory is that it is the outcome of this negotiation that is affected by the election results: central government considers election results to decide whether to give more or less to provinces. Another theory is that the changes in transfers come from those areas not pre-determined by the percentage. Both of these are testable. The first theory can be tested by looking at the % share as the outcome; the second can be tested by looking at other components of the transfers after taking out the fixed %.
* Needs results for the previous elections
  + Reviewer acknowledges that vote percentage data is not available for losing candidates, but suggests using win-loss data and transfers as some cruder analyses. Also suggest moving some of the robustness checks to appendices.
    - MY RESPONSE: I should do this, but 2011 results are going to be problematic.
* Perhaps difference in performance from previous elections provide better measure of “surprise”?
  + MY RESPONSE: I should argue that vote shares are not easy to contextualize; even difference in vote shares are also not easy to contextualize. But maybe it is necessary to conduct analysis using it regardless.

**Reviewer 2**

* Scope condition – one-party regime, uncompetitive election – is not clearly and explicitly declared
  + Reviewer thinks I did not state explicitly that elections are uncompetitive
    - MY RESPONSE: I should just say so more clearly.
  + Reviewer says that the rest of the literature discusses functions in hegemonic regimes, whereas I look at the one-party country of Vietnam. This is important because in Vietnam the level of manipulation required is lower but more is permitted, this in turns makes information more or less useful for the party
    - MY RESPONSE: I should read Schedler 2013 which the reviewer cites
  + MY RESPONSE: Overall, I should be explicit about how Vietnam differs from the other cases in terms of competitiveness, and how that changes the utility of the information that dictators receive
* Lit review missing other works on informational functions of elections
  + Specifically: Besides Schedler's latest book, the (informational) functions of elections have been examined in China (Manion, 1996, 2006; Landry et al., 2010), Azerbaijan (Herron, 2011), Malaysia (Brownlee, 2007) as well as Cambodia, Myanmar and Singapore (Morgenbesser, 2016).
    - MY RESPONSE: I should just check and cite all of them…
  + Morgenbesser 2016 in particular is critical that manipulated elections can provide information at all, if these involve manipulating citizens and “ignores their actual beliefs”
    - MY RESPONSE: I should be more explicit about how the manipulation in the Vietnam case is restrained, as is some other manipulation in other countries. Overall the extent of manipulation depends on regime feeling safe or not. They manipulate but do so just enough for what’s left of the election to be useful. I do have an argument for why manipulation prevents collecting all the information, but need to flesh out more. The basic argument is that election may collect some information, or even no information at all, but not ALL the information, so in a way I agree with the claim from the literature.
* Some candidates are designed to lose and reaction to their defeats are not placation, but reward for the province getting more transfers
  + The regime allows some central candidates to lose to a) signal that election is competitive and b) punish some disloyal, incompetent or ageing elite from the party. This helps them achieve both legitimation and credibility together
    - MY RESPONSE: First, legitimation in Vietnam does not seem to come from being competitive at all. The regime doesn’t seem to even remotely argue that there is contention. Elections are used to “select the best” people to legislate, not as an arena of competition. Second, due to the hiệp thương rounds the regime should have been able to punish and weed out all unwanted elites – why allow these candidates to run for elections when they could have use hiệp thương to replace them with better ones? Furthermore each of these elites could have been removed by removing them from position of power in their “home” organizations which would have been easier. Defeat in this election does not remove them from the party. The only exception is if they want to humiliate someone with a public defeat, but this story seems farfetched. Both these arguments are hard to show/prove. One way to prove the second one would be to show that many of the defeated candidates in the previous (2011) election gets to run again (possibly Hữu Thỉnh). Also, Lê Thị Thu Ba lost the 2011 election but gets to spend the rest of her term in still rather cushy Party position, even joining the Central Committee.
* Why can’t local elections fulfill information needs
  + MY RESPONSE: One possible answer is that in local elections there are no “central candidates” sent from outside whose identity is obviously tied to the central government. In any case, need to discuss the function of local elections better and show why it really cannot provide information on either local level of regime popularity and quality of local officials
* Source needed to substantiate the claim that the secret ballot is indeed secret
  + MY RESPONSE: Can consider data from PEI, especially expert-level surveys. PEI data does not 100% confirm that ballot is secret, but it also suggests that it is less of a concern than other things. In addition, it is the perception of the secret ballot that matters.

**Reviewer 3**

* Analysis only focuses on 2016
  + Reviewer does not understand why article only focuses on 2016
    - MY RESPONSE: I used to have but have somehow omitted a few sentences explaining why only 2016 offers good opportunity to do careful analysis. They also missed the point that defeats happened in previous elections (page 9)
  + MY RESPONSE: general should repeat the same exercise for 2007 and 2011 elections as well…
* What if the increased central transfers ended up incentivizing voters to keep voting against the regime?
  + Reviewer thinks that strategy of rewarding unruly provinces can be risky and unsustainable. Punishment strategy seems more compatible with one-party dominance.
    - MY RESPONSE: I used to have but have somehow omitted a few sentences explaining how it’s hard for voters to make the connection and to repeat the strategy.
  + Reviewer suggests examining the response of voters in the next election – do they stop voting against the party after receiving the transfers
    - MY RESPONSE: I can probably do this for 2011 elections
* Record of provincial leaders who served in 2006 and 2011 should not be informative of whether they were punished for central candidate defeats in 2017
  + MY RESPONSE: I should clarify that this is only to provide tentative information on the CPV’s tendency to use punishment. It suggests that the CPV does not really have a “punishment culture”. I do not have complete data for career paths of officials after 2017 and so can’t make much of a claim on this period
* Typo on page 11: It should be "bad results either suggests areas where the CPV itself is unpopular (rather than popular)…"