Reviewer #3: This article makes a theoretical contribution by arguing that authoritarian regimes can only use elections to provide certain kinds of information, and we can infer their informational strategy by examining their reaction to localized electoral defeats. The argument is made cogently and the empirical roadmap is clear.  
  
My main concern is with the short time period of the study and its small sample size.  To begin with, the article never explained why it only focused on the localized electoral defeats of 2016. Is it because there was no such defeat in previous elections? If this is the case, I think evidence from just one election does not allow researchers to reach a strong conclusion regarding the regime's strategy. The problem is aggravated by the very small sample size, as the restricted sample only contains a dozen provinces. With such a small number of observations and only one election, any conclusion has to be very tentative.

In the beginning of Section 4, I add a paragraph explaining the choice of focusing on 2016 election. In short, by using 2016 as the treatment year, I can access a longer pre-treatment panel. I can also make use of defeated candidates’ vote shares, which were made available only for the 2016 elections, to limit my analysis to defeated central candidates who could have plausibly won, as opposed to candidates who may have been expected to lose (following the logic of the regression discontinuity methods).

Moreover, I think the theoretical argument of the article contains a significant weakness: if the center indeed transfers more resources to provinces that voted against the regime, what kind of signal does it send to the voters? Does not this strategy incentivize voters to keep voting against the regime in future elections, since they can expect more central transfers as a result? It seems to me that the strategy of rewarding "unruly" provinces can be very risky and unsustainable. In fact, many scholars like Magaloni have made the opposition argument: the ruling party will punish districts that voted "the wrong way", deterring them from voting against the regime the next time. I believe the latter strategy is more compatible with an equilibrium of one-party dominance than the strategy described in this article.  
  
One way to find out whether the article's strategy is sustainable is to examine the response of voters in the next election, especially in those provinces that delivered rare defeats. Having received central transfer, do voters stop voting against the party? This article, however, cannot pursue this path since it only focused on one election. It reinforces my point that we can't really find out much about the regime's strategy without observing multiple rounds of elections.  
  
Another point: On page 30, how can the promotion record of provincial leaders who served in 2006 and 2011 tell us whether provincial leaders were punished for central candidate defeats in 2017? Presumably this question can only be answered by looking at the career paths of officials after 2017? I don't understand this.

To clarify, data on the career paths of officials after 2017 would not be complete, as most major personnel decisions that will affect officials who were governing during the 2016 election will not be announced until the upcoming Party Congress in 2020. Until then, it is not possible to know which provincial official will get promoted.

The promotion record of provincial leaders who served in 2006 and 2011 provide only an indirect test: it shows that the CPV does not have a tradition of punishing provincial leaders for failing to secure central candidate victories. It offers suggestive evidence at best, but is helpful because it corroborates my observation that the CPV rarely resorts to punishing its agents except for various serious transgressions. Acknowledging that this is not the smoking-gun evidence, however, I have modified the language in the manuscript.  
  
There seems to be a typo on p.11. It should be "bad results either suggests areas where the CPV itself is unpopular (rather than popular)…"

I have fixed this typo  
  
I would encourage the author(s) to consider these points in their revised version.