Revision Outline

**Theory**

Theories about authoritarian elections’ purposes, especially those about information, cannot all be right

* Co-optation theories
* Show of strength theories
* Power-sharing theories
* Information flow theories
  + Particularly vulnerable: requiring allocating causes
    - “Local bureaucrats” and “Geographic Distribution”

Important to adjudicate between these theories

* Different implications for accountability
* Different implications for prospect of democratization
* Literature has not been dealing with this problem appropriately

One way to adjudicate between the theories is to look at responses to post-election defeats

* Post-election responses as window into authoritarian leaders’ thinking process
  + Regime generally doesn’t prefer defeats and want to avoid them, but don’t want to make defeats impossible
  + If regime uses elections as a source of information, information generates from elections would inform action
    - Election results lead to inaction only if these results don’t produce any critical information, or the regime doesn’t choose to pick up any information from it
  + Election defeats are high-information event; if it is true that the regime relies on elections as information they would definitely act
  + Election results can generate different signals, but how the regime responses to the results reveal exactly how the regime interprets election results
* Post-election responses help identify exact thinking process in contexts where different interpretations of the same results cannot suggest the same post-election responses
  + In these cases looking at which responses ended up being chosen reveals the exact thinking process behind it
* How regime sees election results is a function of the purpose they designed elections for
  + Sometimes this is a conscious process: regime may have already tried to rule out alternative causes of defeat
  + In other cases it may be a problem of tunnel/myopic vision: regime sees a cause of defeat only because it has committed to one purpose of election even though the real cause may be different.
  + In this sense, looking at election results also reveals what theory of authoritarian elections apply for this particular context

**Empirical Strategy**

Intro: I look at Vietnam to demonstrate the logic. In particular, I look at the Vietnamese central government’s response to election defeats to adjudicate between two popular theories

* On one hand, both are viable
* On the other hand, both cannot hold true together
  + The kind of election responses required of one contradict very much with another.

Background: Elections in Vietnam

* Design of the elections
* Central nominees and local defeats of central nominees as defeats

Two theories of authoritarian elections in Vietnam

* “Local bureaucrat” theory
  + Implication: top-down accountability, “smart” authoritarianism, efficient bureaucrat
* “Geographic distribution” theory
  + Implication: bottom-up accountability, nominally democratic, responsive to public opinion

Testing the two theories in Vietnam using post-election responses

* Both theory at first are viable
* Both theory may hold true together, but the Vietnamese government cannot respond to both theories
  + Their toolkit is limited to central transfers, the most important central control tool
* As a result, looking at Vietnamese government’s response to election defeats reveal what they believe to be the cause of the defeats, and ultimately the purpose of authoritarian elections
* In particular, the problem reduces to looking at the causal effect of election defets

**Data and Methods**

[See Revision Empirics 180631.docx]