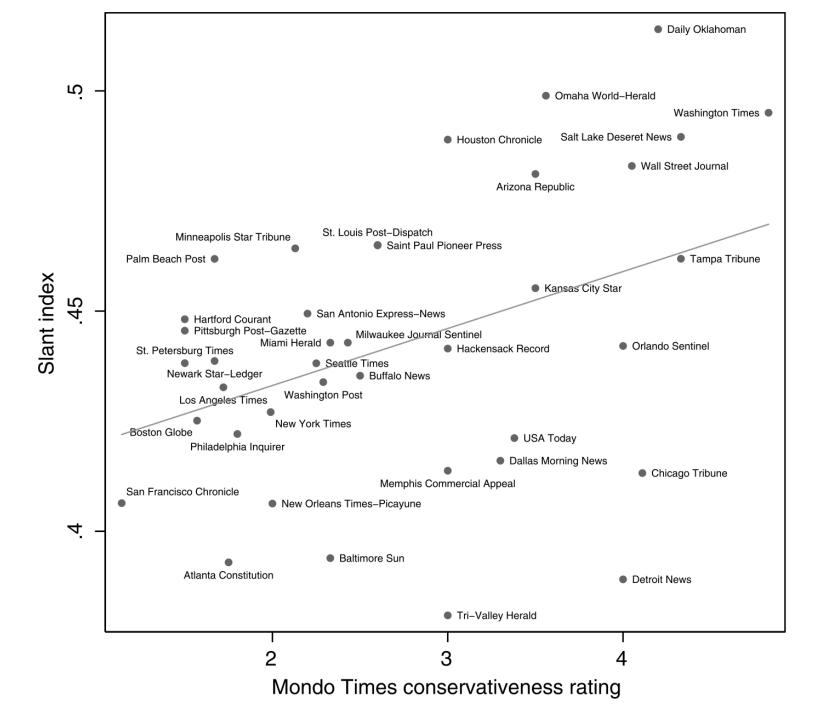
# Measuring bias in Indian newspapers

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## Inspiration

- Gentzkow & Shapiro 2010
- First economics paper to use text data in an innovative way
- 'What drives media slant?': supply side or demand side?
- Intermediate step: need to quantify 'slant' or bias
- Done by comparing text from congressional record (ideology labeled using constituency vote share) against newspaper text

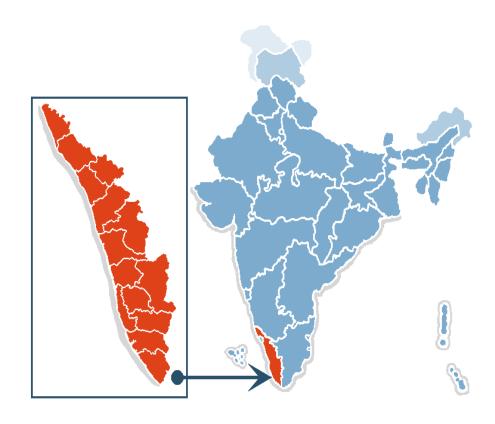


## My project

- Similar exercise with Malayalam-language newspapers in the Indian state of Kerala
- Want to get better at language, learn something about politics
- Challenges: dealing with non-standard text, not many pre-existing NLP resources, agglutinative language

## Kerala

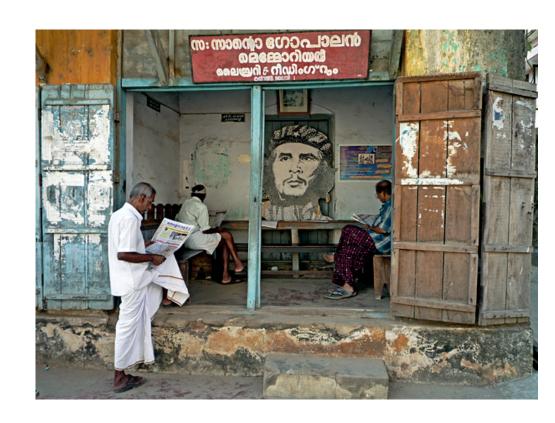
- South-western tip of India
- First state to democratically elect communist government
- Now, multiple parties but dominated by two coalitions: Left Democratic Front (LDF) and congressled United Democratic Front (UDF) who have traded majority power in legislature since Kerala founding





## More background

- Legislative Assembly: Niyamasabha (140 elected members)
- Last election in 2011
- Print media widely consumed
- Bias is widely thought to exist – some papers are owned by certain parties

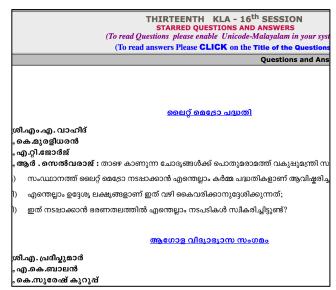


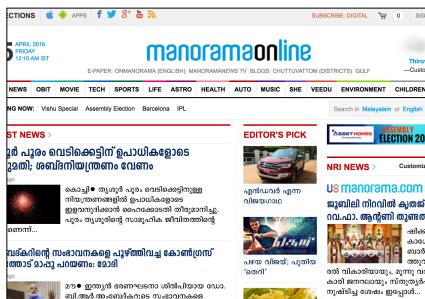
## Method

- Get text from legislative hearings
- Label by political slant/ideology from vote share data
- Generate text features and build regression model of slant
- Get newspaper article text and fit to model to get slant score for each newspaper

### Data

- Text of legislative meetings available online
  - But mostly as PDFs
  - But 'Question and Answer' sessions available on html pages (bad sample?)
  - Scraped a month's worth of these (labeled with speaker/ s)
- Vote share data from 2011 election available online
- Text from newspaper articles available online





## Feature engineering and selection

- Represent legislative text as bag of words
- Drop 'stop words', rare words (have to define own stop words)
- Each document has ideology label
- Use chi-squared test to find words/phrases most representative of a particular party

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(Observed - Expected)^2}{Expected}$$

 Intuition: If we assumed party and words used were randomly assigned, which co-occur more/less often than we would expect?

# Gentzkow & Shapiro

#### **Democrats:**

- 'Workers rights'
- 'Poor people'
- 'Estate tax'

#### **Republicans:**

- 'Stem cell'
- 'Saddam Hussein'
- 'Death tax'

# Gentzkow & Shapiro

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### Me

Lots of procedural words, question words, etc

#### LDF:

- അഗ്രികുൽറ്റു (agriculture)
- ആദിവാസി (adivasi)
- More negative words [അവബോധ, അനധികൃത]

#### **UDF:**

- Many procedural/question words
- അഞ്ചുവര്ഷങ്ങളിലായി വകയിരുത്തി (For five years, we've been here)
- And variations

## Ongoing work

- Tinkering with model not getting great explanatory power in-sample
- Use article text to help generate features
- Fit article text and get slant of newspapers!

# Thanks!