

Analysis of Political Parties graph:

I was interested in this graph because it shows big spikes in three years in particular, and I wondered what the possible significance might be. The words themselves in this Topic are fairly coherent : ‘party’, ‘Republican’ and ‘Democrat’ are the first three. In referencing the pie charts, I found that this topic doesn’t seem particularly important in the broad view of either party. Its mentions are relatively small, although slightly higher in the Democratic mentions than Republicans (approx. 2.4 %vs 1.8%). The years of the largest upward spikes are 1956, 1964, and 1980. I looked at the texts that mentioned this topic the most and found that Johnson and Goldwater in 1964 were using this group of words the most, with Johnson at 167 words and Goldwater at 136. So the largest spike corresponds to a roughly even split between the two parties. However, the next highest spike, in 1956, corresponds to the 3rd highest word count of Eisenhower in 1956, with 1956 Democratic nominee Stevenson farther down the list at 8th highest mentions. The 4th highest mention corresponds with 1952 Democratic nominee Stevenson. At this point the graph is on an upward trend, but it’s worth noting that 1952 Republican nominee Eisenhower is far down the mention list at 12th highest. The 1980 spike similarly shows up as dominated by one party, with 1980 Republican nominee Reagan at 4th highest mentions.

So, what might this topic be useful for? It doesn’t seem mappable to a particular Republican or Democratic agenda, since both parties have spikes in mentions in different years. Nor does it appear mappable to a consistent set of value or policies, since incumbent candidates fluctuate quite a bit in their use of this topic. And yet, the spikes and coherency of the topic seem large enough to be significant.

A bit of light research shows that Eisenhower, Carter, and Johnson were all three incumbent nominees in the years of high mentions, and Stevenson was running Democrat while a Democrat was in office. So, maybe this topic is useful for attempting to keep the status quo.

However, it must be about more than that. The Republican and Democratic parties have evolved considerably, and drastic changes to both platforms came about in the late 50's and early 60's. It's entirely possible that this topic provides the rhetoric to incite and describe shifts in party platforms, and define the parties themselves.