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Thursday, November 19, 2009

Contrasting Obama's and Reagan's Speeches about Freedom [Veronique de Rugy]

Cato Institute's VP David Boaz has this interesting post [comparing Obama's and Reagan's definitions of freedom](#). The analysis — based on President Obama's speech to Chinese college students on Monday and Pres. [Ronald Reagan's](#) speech to Moscow State University students in 1988 — reveals some striking differences.

Obama, Boaz writes, gave an eloquent defense of freedom, and in particular "freedoms of expression and worship — of access to information and political participation," which he identifies as core American and universal values. Yet the president leaves out "freedom of enterprise, [property rights](#), and limited government as American values. Those are not only the necessary conditions for growth and prosperity, they are the necessary foundation for civil liberties."

In other words, he doesn't truly get what freedom is about.

Now let's look at Reagan. The president starts with [democracy](#), justice, and openness and then:

He came back to the basic purpose of democracy in the American context, not a plebiscitary system but a way to ensure that the governors don't exceed the consent of the governed: "Democracy is less a system of government than it is a system to keep government limited, unintrusive; a system of constraints on power to keep politics and government secondary to the important things in life, the true sources of value found only in family and faith."

He tied all of these freedoms to the American commitment to economic freedom as well. Throughout the speech he tried to enlighten students who had grown up under communism about the meaning of free enterprise.

The [whole post](#) is way worth reading. Plus, [Reagan's speech](#) is very uplifting.

By the way, the same can be said about the way Obama uses words like competition, accountability, or fiscal responsibility. Obviously, the president doesn't understand the

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