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## Driving the Conversation:

# Obama in Egypt: What should he say and not say?

## Live chat Wednesday at 12:30 on "The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009" with Brookings' Mark Muro

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**David Boaz**, Executive VP, Cato Institute:

*First, I wish he hadn't chosen Egypt for a speech to the Muslim world.* This just reinforces the mistaken impression that Islam equals the Arab world. In fact, Arabs make up only 15 or 20 percent of the world's Muslims, barely more than the number in Indonesia alone and far fewer than the number in the Indian subcontinent. It seems to me that Obama would

be better off delivering his message to the Muslim world somewhere closer to where most Muslims live. Perhaps even in his own childhood home of Indonesia. In Indonesia, Malaysia, India, or Pakistan he could give a speech on America and the Muslim world surrounded by rival political leaders in a democratic country and by internationally recognized business leaders. It would be good for the president to draw attention to the [more moderate version of Islam](#) practiced in those countries.

Obama told NPR that in his speech "the main thing for me to do is to project what our values are, what our ideals are, what we care most deeply about. And that is democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion." Those are all important values, but I hope he will also stress the benefits of private property and a free and open economy, which is an indispensable foundation for democracy and civil liberties. And also the limited powers of government in a free society. He could do worse than to read [President Reagan's speech at Moscow State University](#) to students who were still living under Communism.

And in an ideal world, he'd tell his Arab and Muslim listeners how he had set in motion the withdrawal of U.S. troops from two wars in Muslim countries, and how that was part of a new, more restrained and non-interventionist foreign policy, in which the United States would not try to police the world or impose democracy at gunpoint. But that would be a world in which President Obama had not in fact doubled down on the war in Afghanistan and promised to keep 50,000 troops in Iraq for as far as the eye can see.

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