



Celebrating America at 250

As America celebrates its 250th birthday, we should pause, not just to light fireworks or enjoy hot dogs and parades, but to ask a harder question: what kind of country do we want to be at 250 years (and for the next 250 years)? Not in slogans. Not in cable-news shouting matches. But in practice.

Here's my answer: something I'll call Pragmatic Patriotism.

Pragmatic Patriotism is a philosophy rooted less in ideology and more in results. It's optimistic without being naive, proud without being fragile, and serious about governing in a way that works. Picture optimism that is confident, forward-looking, and grounded in common sense. Optimism in a cowboy hat, if you will.

In foreign policy, Pragmatic Patriotism borrows heavily from [Ronald Reagan's "peace through strength."](#) The idea is simple. America should be strong enough that we don't have to prove it. We invest in a capable military not because we want conflict, but precisely so we can avoid it. Power is most effective when it's credible and restrained.

At the same time, we understand that alliances matter. NATO isn't a charity. It is one of the best investments in global stability the United States has ever made. Like a proud parent at a kid's soccer game, we cheer our allies on and occasionally remind them to hustle. Shared security only works if everyone carries their share of the equipment.

Domestically, Pragmatic Patriotism looks a lot like [Bill Clinton's economic sensibility](#): grow the economy, respect markets, and keep an eye on the books. A strong private sector creates opportunity, but prosperity shouldn't pool exclusively at the penthouse level. Economic growth works best when it reaches Main Street, not just Wall Street.

From Dwight Eisenhower, we inherit a [deep appreciation for infrastructure](#). The interstate highway system wasn't flashy, but it was transformative. Roads, bridges, airports, broadband, housing, and energy are not partisan luxuries; they're the connective tissue of a modern economy. Nothing says freedom like being able to move people, goods, and ideas efficiently without blowing out an axle.

On civil rights, Pragmatic Patriotism stands firmly with [Lyndon Johnson's belief](#) that America is strongest when everyone gets a fair shot. Equal opportunity isn't a talking point so much as it's an economic and moral necessity. When barriers exist, the government has a role in removing them. Discrimination belongs in history books, not modern life.

John F. Kennedy contributes [the idealism](#). The belief that public service is honorable. That citizenship comes with responsibility. That big problems deserve big thinking. "Ask not what your country can do for you" still resonates (though if the country wants to fix the DMV along the way, no one will complain).

Socially, Pragmatic Patriotism [leans libertarian](#). The government should stay out of bedrooms, personal decisions, and private lives. If you're not harming others, it's not the government's job to referee. Freedom works best when it's personal, not performative.

On trade, we embrace [neoliberalism and are unapologetically pro-free market](#). Free enterprise has lifted billions out of poverty and lowered costs for American families. But pragmatism matters. We should compete aggressively, protect critical industries, and avoid getting hustled in a global game of [three-card monte](#).

Taken together, Pragmatic Patriotism is not about nostalgia. It's about stewardship. It's big dreams, big highways, strong alliances, and just enough government to get things done without making taxpayers feel like they're victims of a hostile takeover. It's about being inclusive and fighting the [populism](#) that seeks to divide us. It is uniquely American. This is something that we at [Vail Valley Partnership](#) strive to incorporate into our [public policy positions](#) and to embrace when [advocating for Eagle County](#) at a local, state, and federal level. Our challenges, after all, are not Republican or Democratic challenges; they are community challenges.

At 250, America doesn't need to reinvent itself. It simply needs to recommit to what has always worked: optimism, fairness, strength, and the practical courage to govern well.

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