

PASSING THROUGH THE GREAT FILTER: HOW ARE WE DOING?

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**TRANSHUMANIST
PARTY**

PUTTING SCIENCE, HEALTH, & TECHNOLOGY
AT THE FOREFRONT OF AMERICAN POLITICS



**TRANSHUMAN
Club**



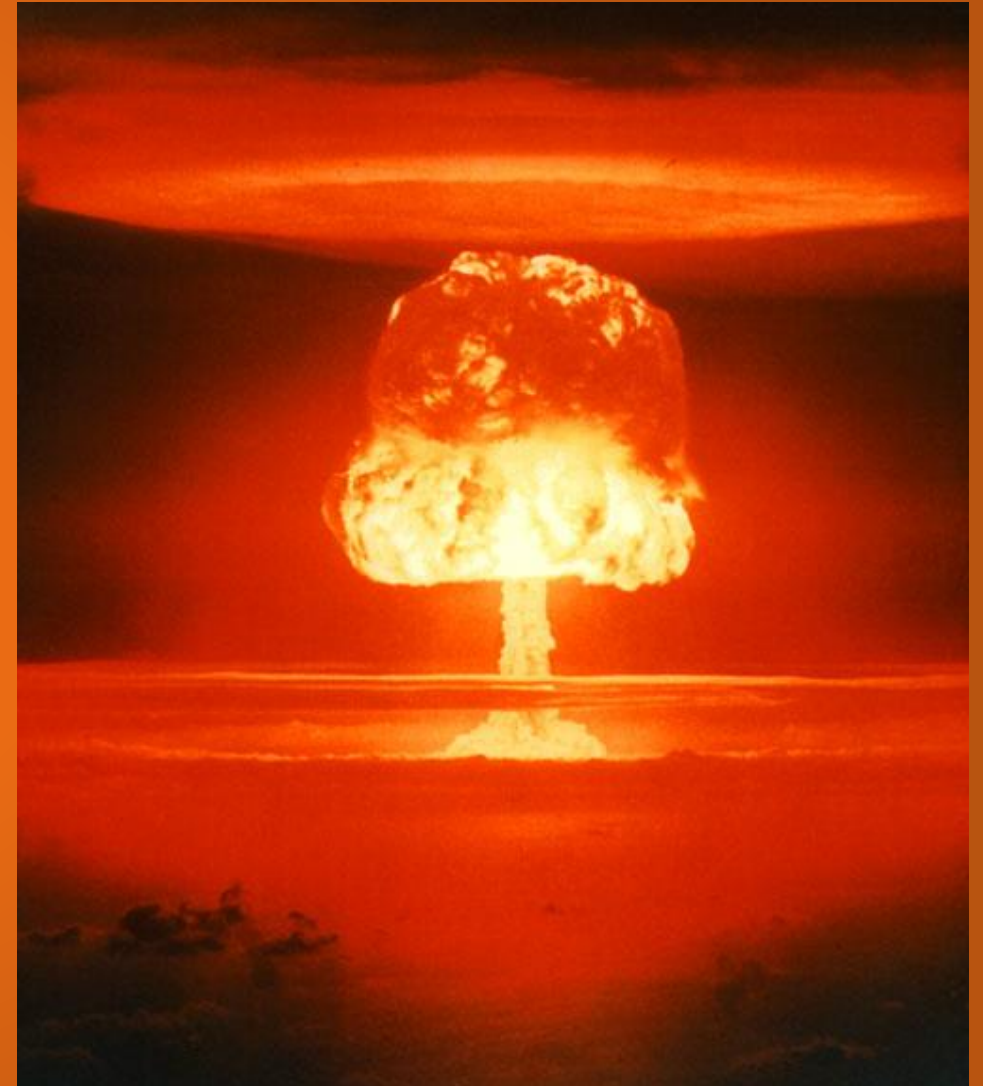
Existential Risk

Why am I focusing on this?

Because mitigating and eliminating existential risks is a core transhumanist pursuit.

U. S. Transhumanist Party Core Ideal 3. The United States Transhumanist Party supports efforts to use science, technology, and rational discourse to reduce and eliminate various existential risks to the human species.

Transhumanists want to live longer and better – lead lives of indefinite duration and indefinite potential. If humankind is annihilated, we will be unable to do that.



Castle Romeo Nuclear Test (1954)

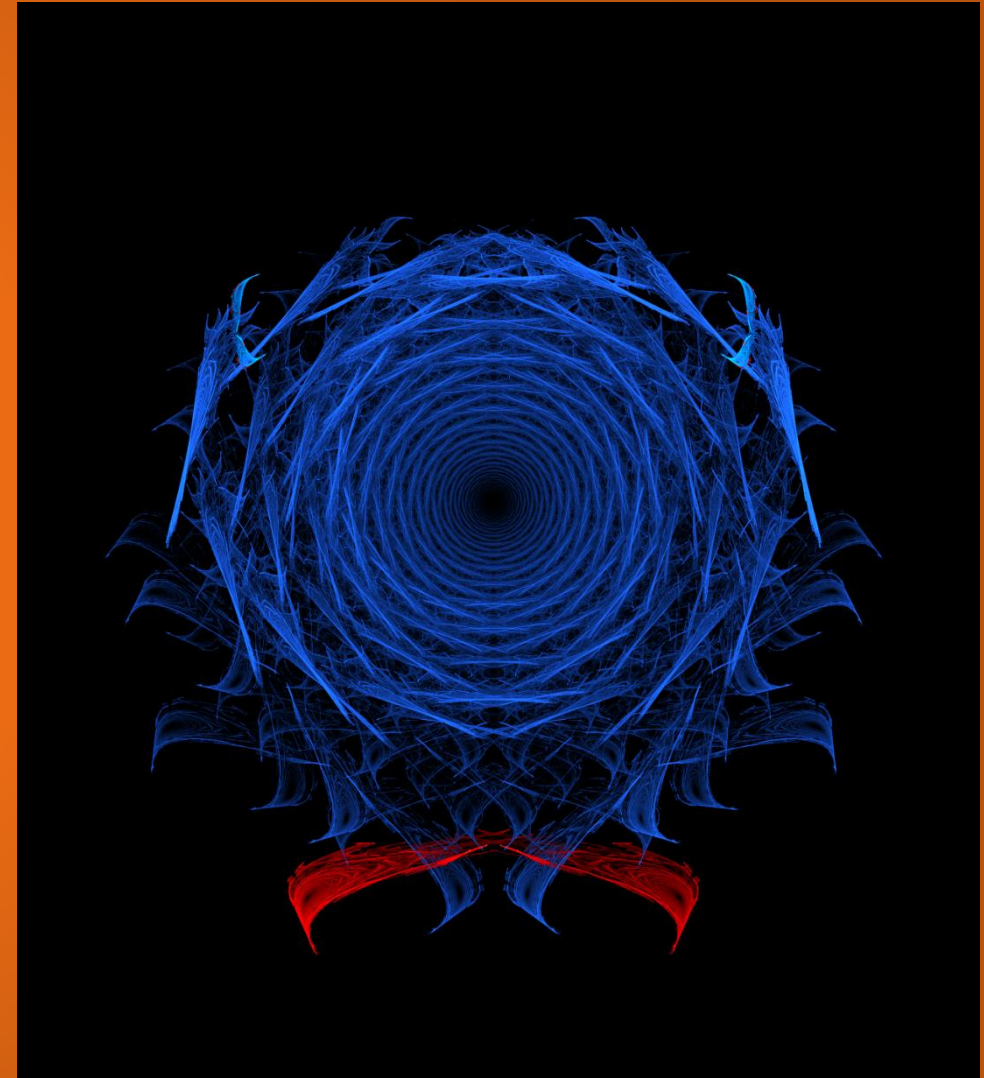


The Great Filter

*“Humanity seems to have a bright future, i.e., a non-trivial chance of expanding to fill the universe with lasting life. But the fact that space near us seems dead now tells us that any given piece of dead matter faces an astronomically low chance of [bringing about] such a future. There thus **exists a great filter between death and expanding lasting life**, and humanity faces the ominous question: **how far along this filter are we?**”*

“The most pessimistic social scenarios are scenarios like massive nuclear war or ecological disaster. Such devastating war would likely need to be prior to dispersal across the solar system, unless it could destroy our sun. [...] It seems possible, though unlikely, that only one in a million worlds at our stage avoids such a fate. While even this would still leave most of the Great Filter to be explained in some other way, the prospect of such a possibility is a strong motivation for studying the Great Filter.”

*~ Robin Hanson, “The Great Filter – Are We Almost Past It?”
(September 15, 1998)*



Abstract Orderism Fractal XLV: Wormhole Fractal
Gennady Stolyarov II (2013)

My Argument in May 2022: The Great Filter is Now

- **Essay** – “2022: The Year of the Great Filter” – Published on May 16, 2022:
<https://transhumanist-party.org/2022/05/16/2022-great-filter/>
- **Virtual Enlightenment Salon** – “2022: The Year of the Great Filter” – Streamed on May 29, 2022:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVgs5Jfvd8w>
- *“2022 is the year of the Great Filter. There has never been a more dangerous time for our species before, and there will not be again, if we survive this year.”*

“The war in Ukraine has brought the world to the edge of nuclear calamity, because neither side wishes to negotiate or make concessions. The Russian regime makes reckless nuclear threats, Western/NATO powers recklessly ignore them, and continue to supply offensive weapons to Ukrainian forces, whose ideology favors recklessly dying for their country instead of prudently choosing to live for themselves. The risks of especially unintended, accidental escalation continue to accumulate the longer this war drags on with no clear end in sight.”

“The one ray of hope in all this is that I am firmly convinced that this is a unique, non-repeatable situation. If humankind can avoid extinction arising from reckless escalation here, then our species will never be in this much existential danger again, at least not from manmade causes.”



My Evolving Thoughts on the Probability of Nuclear War in 2022



- On March 20, 2022, I estimated the probability to be $\approx 10\%$. David Wood gave an estimate **between 0.1% and 1%**.
- Panel Discussion: **Reducing Existential Risk from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhq1a9vLJGg>
- My subjective estimate of probability peaked at $\approx 15\%$ on **April 26, 2022**, when, at the Ramstein Defense Conference, the NATO powers announced that their explicit intention was “to weaken Russia”.
- Right now (September 10, 2022) my estimate has been reduced to **around 0.4%** (so I am more aligned with David Wood’s assessment). Why?
 - **Time has passed**, and the situation has become more familiar to various governments. Knowledge reduces the likelihood of sudden overreaction.
 - **Putin chose not to escalate** on various occasions when he could have – e.g., refusing to formally declare war on Ukraine, refusing to institute mass military mobilization in Russia, calling for an “operational pause” after the capture of Lysychansk, agreeing to a deal to allow export of grain from Ukraine. **Putin is choosing a low-level conflict that allows him to remain in power over an escalation that could destroy him.**
 - **Joe Biden personally does not wish to escalate** the war, even though many in his party do. He also has a midterm election to contend with, and American public opinion has heavily shifted to focus on domestic concerns: inflation, scarcity of goods, housing unaffordability, recession.
 - **Leaders of France and Germany serve as restraining influences** – voices of reason in favor of a diplomatic solution.
 - **Winter is coming**; the conflict is likely to stagnate further along existing lines if neither side achieves a breakthrough by October.



Current Status of the War in Ukraine

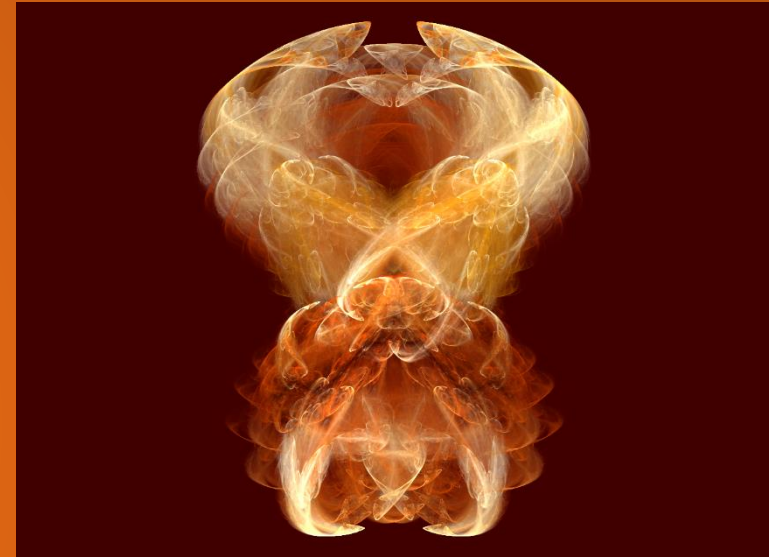
- **Stalemate:** Both sides are exhausted and making minimal advances.
- Russian offensive ran out of momentum in early July 2022. Current Ukrainian counteroffensives may occupy some small settlements but are unlikely to take large cities.
- Both sides are still confident that they can make gains and are essentially refusing to negotiate.
- This stalemate is tragic and destructive for the people near the front lines. However, for now, the conflict is being kept local.





Risks of Nuclear Escalation

- Nuclear escalation can still arise if the stalemate is broken or if one side tries to break it with particular vigor. **Key premise:** Neither side will accept a military defeat. If fighting continues, both sides will seek total victory.
- **If Ukraine's counteroffensive succeeds in a significant way:** The Russian regime might, out of fear and lack of other options for victory, launch tactical nuclear weapons against Ukrainian military positions and large cities. This could lead to a strategic nuclear escalation from NATO.
- **If Russian forces decisively repel the Ukrainian counteroffensive and resume occupying significant new territory:** NATO powers may grow fearful and provide the Ukrainian army with much more powerful offensive weapons – including long-range missiles that can strike Russian territory and Crimea. If significant damage occurs on Russian territory, the Russian regime may see this as an existential threat and launch either a tactical or a strategic nuclear strike.

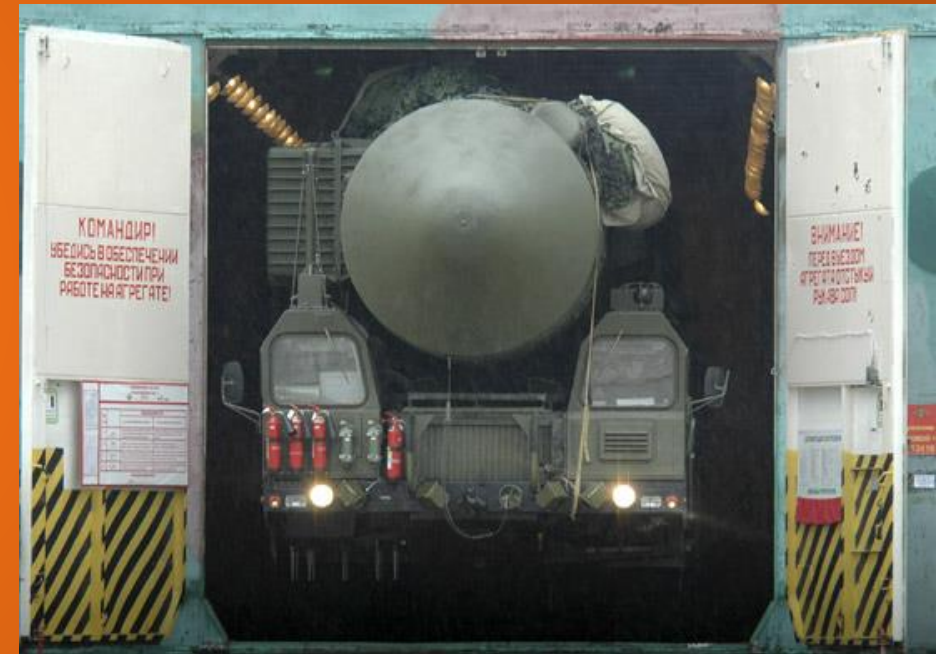


Abstract Orderism Fractal XXII
Gennady Stolyarov II (2010)



Risks of Nuclear Escalation (Continued)

- **If Russian bombing campaigns in Western Ukraine escalate:** An accidental landing of a missile on the territory of a NATO country becomes much more likely. Such an accidental strike could be interpreted as an act of aggression by the NATO countries, who might consider the Article V collective-defense provision to be triggered and enter the war, leading to a chain reaction of events that could culminate in nuclear war.
- **If Russian tensions with the Baltic countries escalate:** For example, a conflict over the shipment of supplies to Kaliningrad could lead the Russian regime to take hostile action against Lithuania, which would then be interpreted by the NATO countries as an act of war and lead to direct NATO military intervention – culminating in nuclear war.
- **Other accidents are always possible.** Even during the peak of the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Union maintained continuous military lines of communication to prevent misunderstandings and ensure that the other side's intentions were clear. *Those communications have been severed as a result of the war in Ukraine. The biggest risk is that either side could misinterpret the other as having launched a first strike.*





What Does this Mean for the Great Filter?

- We will probably muddle through 2022 without a nuclear war.
- However, no one (in a position of power) has learned the lessons of 2022. No one has had a “Never Again” moment with regard to nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear annihilation.
- The risk factors for nuclear war will diminish for a few months but may be reignited in Spring 2023, unless:
 - The Russian regime changes in the meantime; or
 - Either side becomes exhausted on the front lines – runs out of manpower, supplies, weaponry; or
 - The position of the Western powers becomes substantially more favorable toward a diplomatic solution



*Moscow 2012 Victory Day Parade
Rehearsal, Topol-M Nuclear Missile
Launchers,
Photograph by Vyacheslav Argenberg*



How Long is the Great Filter?

- I maintain that we are **somewhat more than halfway through** the Great Filter, and that the midpoint was **approximately July 1, 2022**.
- **But when did we enter the Great Filter?**
- ❖ **February 24, 2022: Start of current war in Ukraine?** (*But the preconditions that led to this existed for much longer.*)
- ❖ **November 2019: Start of COVID-19 Pandemic?** (The pandemic led most world leaders to behave less rationally – including Vladimir Putin. It also led to episodes of collective insanity in many countries, including in the West. *But the institutional rigidity and fragility that led to a lingering pandemic existed for much longer.*)
- ❖ **2017: Donald Trump's nuclear buildup in the United States, Russia's response in 2018 via the RS-28 Sarmat missile?** (*But the infrastructure to make this happen was created many years earlier.*)
- ❖ **February 2014: Maidan Revolution in Ukraine – Subsequent Russian annexation of Crimea?** (Prior to this there were no armed territorial conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, and the tensions could have been resolved peacefully and indirectly. *But there were many points along the way, including the Minsk Accords, where a diplomatic solution was possible.*)
- ❖ **May 7, 2012: Vladimir Putin's return as President of Russia?** (*But Putin was de facto in power even when he was not President, and his evolution to a world security threat was gradual.*)
- ❖ **August 6, 1945: The U.S. nuclear bombing of Hiroshima?** (Perhaps we never truly got rid of the existential threat of nuclear weapons since they were first deployed. During certain periods of time, we were just lulled into a false sense of security. *But diplomacy was able to reduce US/USSR nuclear stockpiles $\approx 6x$ in the 1980s-1990s!*)

Humankind has survived the first half of 2022, the year of our greatest existential risk. We are halfway through the Great Filter!

***Post by Gennady Stolyarov II
July 1, 2022***

***When will we emerge from the Great Filter?
2023? 2025? 2027? 2030? 2032? 2099?
When nuclear weapons are abolished?***

***What do you think?
Are we in a Great Filter of long, simmering
existential risk or sharp, acute existential risk?***



What Can Transhumanists Do?

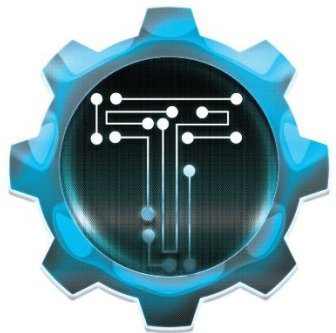
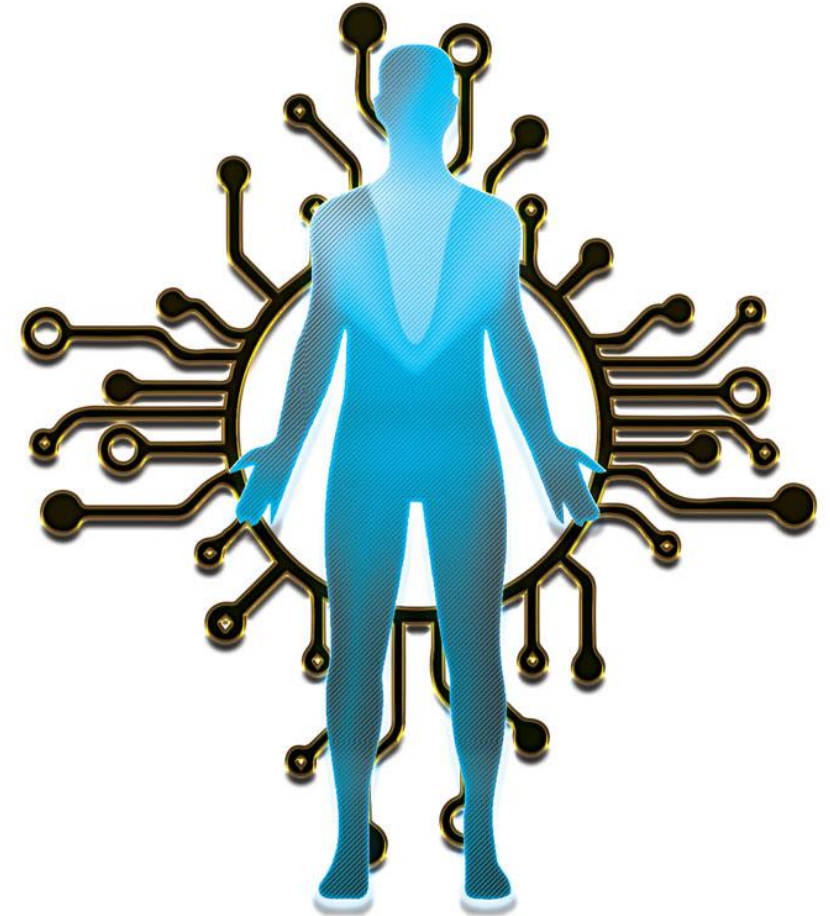
- **Unfortunately, there are not many of us, and we have not had enough societal or political influence to prevent this chain of events.** Most of today's global geopolitical dynamics are driven by primitive tribalist / nationalistic / Cold War thinking.
- **The progress of transhumanism as a movement was particularly derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic and both its immediate and insidious long-term effects, resulting in societies being driven more by short-termism, fear, and techno-pessimism.**
- **But we can do something:**
 - **Advocate for nuclear disarmament:** The risk of nuclear war is the greatest existential risk, and it is time for the transhumanist community to recognize this. We need to deal with **real, present-day existential risks** as a priority over **remote, hypothetical risks from not-yet-existent technologies**. Fortunately, **we have many allies in this**.
 - **Immunize oneself against partisan propaganda:** Particularly the propaganda of the Democratic Party in the United States and the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom now seeks to place the populace on a perpetually outraged war footing in order to distract from domestic problems such as inflation, material scarcity, and unaffordability of necessities. **Emphasizing everyday, domestic problems as more important for ordinary people** can help bring about **war fatigue** and **public pressure on politicians** to focus on diplomacy. *(Note that the above is not a partisan analysis: The problem parties are not uniformly left-wing or right-wing. Ruling parties are more likely to be problem parties.)*
 - **Build up our internal infrastructure:** We have many world-class thinkers but are organizationally spread thin and lacking in capacity to implement public-facing projects. **We have the correct ideas already** (at least, much better ideas than those that dominate the status quo). We need about **15 rigorously trained implementers** to work tirelessly to instantiate those ideas in highly visible ways and in a coordinated, systematic fashion. **Where to find them? How to motivate them?**
 - But first we need to develop a **training program for the implementers**. Options: David Wood's Vital Syllabus, Transhuman Club educational modules, excerpts from USTP Virtual Enlightenment Salons. Broader theoretical discussions need to be integrated with analyses of current events, artistic and cultural creations, roadmaps and regular status updates on the status of various emerging technologies. **This is extremely ambitious. How soon can it be done?**



A Closing Thought

Transhumanism Symbols by Rachel Edler

Transhumanism is still ultimately the solution to existential risk. But we need to build it up quickly and systematically to increase the probability of emerging out of the Great Filter.

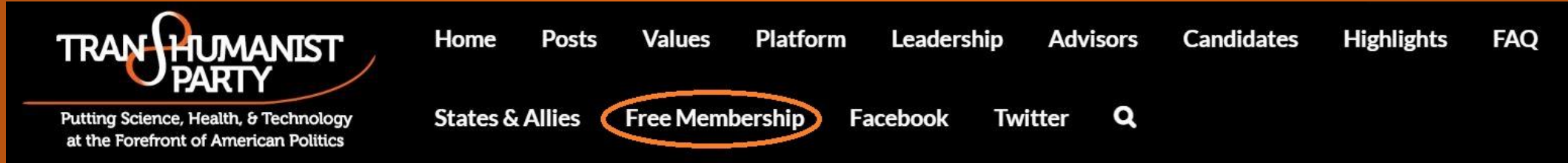


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<https://transhumanist-party.org/membership/>



<http://transhuman.club>



Questions?