prices in some countries) offered security to many Western populations against the demands of illness, unemployment, and old age.

Postmaterialism is a commitment to self-expression values, emphasizing human diversity, individual liberty, and autonomy. These values can emerge, especially among the educated young, from a foundation of personal security and material affluence. Such priorities supplant traditional survival values emphasizing physical and material security (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

According to Inglehart (1971), this unique combination of affluence, peace, and security led to a silent revolution in Western political cultures. Inglehart (1997, p, 28) suggested that the priority accorded to economic achievement made way for increased emphasis on the quality of life: ‘in a major part of the world, the disciplined, self-denying and achievement-oriented norms of industrial society are giving way to the choices over lifestyle which characterize post-industrial economies’.

From the 1960s, a new generation of postmaterialists emerged: young, well-educated people focused on lifestyle issues such as ecology, nuclear disarmament, and feminism. Earlier generations had given priority to survival values, leading to a concern with order, security and fixed rules in such areas as religion and sexual morality. But postmaterialists gave priority to self-expression values, emphasizing autonomy, flexibility, and tolerance, for themselves if not always for their own children. Postmaterialists were elite-challenging advocates of the new politics, rather than elite-sustaining foot soldiers in the old party battles. They were more attracted to single-issue groups than to the broader packages offered by political parties.

Based on extensive survey evidence, Inglehart showed that the more affluent a democracy, the higher the proportion of postmaterialists within its borders. Within Europe, for example, postmaterialism came first to, and made deepest inroads in, the wealthiest democracies such as Denmark, the Netherlands, and West Germany. Norway apart, the other affluent Scandinavian countries also proved receptive to these values. Postmaterialism was less common in poorer European democracies with lower levels of education, such as Greece (Knutsen, 1996).

Assuming a generational effect, postmaterial values will continue to become more prominent. When Inglehart began his studies in the early 1970s, materialists out-numbered postmaterialists by about four to one in many Western countries. By 2000, the two groups were much more even in size, a major transformation in political culture. Even allowing for some decay of radicalism with age, generational replacement will continue to work its effect. As