

FINANCIAL TIMES

November 18, 2015

By Bijan Khezri

Division that runs straight through western society

Sir, With reference to Gideon Rachman (“The clash of civilisations revisited”, November 17): the issue is much bigger than Muslim v non-Muslim.

It is, as Tony Blair stated following the 2005 London bombings, “the age-old battle between those who embrace and see opportunity in the modern world and those who reject its existence”. In fact, the division runs straight through western society.

The Paris attacks are a clash *about* civilisation. A growing number of young people are disenfranchised and actively look for refuge in something more meaningful. They are vulnerable to radicalisation. In the case of France, its impotence in making postcolonial history an integral part of its “grande nation”, instead ringfencing young Arabs in suburban agglomerations for decades, has created fertile grounds for radicalisation. There has been no *égalité* of a sense of national belonging.

“The fiercest battle will be fought inside the Muslim world. That is where the revolution is taking place, and where it will have to be halted, preferably not by outside intervention, but by Muslims themselves,” wrote Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit in their book *Occidentalism* in 2004.

On the western front, a supportive stance on immigration as a humanitarian commitment is futile unless supported by a proactive policy of socio-economic integration. Multiculturalism in the absence of the right policy framework will not work.

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