

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مباد بدین یوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/australia-wasnt-found-it-was-invaded-by-britain>

Australia wasn't 'found': it was invaded by Britain

Sholto Byrnes

April 5, 2016

Imagine if two or three hundred years ago an enterprising and militaristic group of men set sail from Asia and landed in a remote part of Europe.

Declaring the area so sparsely populated as to constitute "terra nullius", or land that didn't really belong to anyone, the newcomers set up a state, to which they brought thousands more of their countrymen.

The local Europeans, who were considered childlike savages with nothing that could be regarded as a proper legal system, were steadily deprived of their land, either by grossly unfair treaties or by outright denials that they ever had title to it in the first place. The new country had been "discovered", "settled" by superior Asians, whose mission was to bring civilisation to the poor, benighted barbarians, regardless of their wishes.

Fast forward to today, and if such a country had persisted – an enclave of Europe with an overwhelmingly Asian population, where the idea of the prime minister being white still seemed fanciful – its right to existence would undoubtedly be recognised.

The idea that it had been "discovered", however, or that its borders and its settlement had been established by anything other than invasion and brute force, would not.

Reverse the situation, and one would imagine the same would apply. I wrote in these pages a while ago that it would be implausible in the 21st century for anyone still to maintain that Columbus “discovered” America, given that the rest of the world is by now very aware of the Native Americans and First Nations peoples who were already there, and to whom knowledge of the land they had lived in for centuries was no news at all.

It seems I was wrong – at least going by an extraordinary row in Australia over how that country’s history should be described.

For a rumpus has kicked off over the University of New South Wales’s indigenous terminology guide, which suggests that the words “invasion, colonisation and occupation” are “more appropriate” than “settlement” to describe the arrival of Europeans in Australia, and that the country should not be considered to have been “discovered”.

As the guide points out, quite accurately: “Australia was not settled peacefully, it was invaded, occupied and colonised. Describing the arrival of the Europeans as a ‘settlement’ attempts to view Australian history from the shores of England rather than the shores of Australia.”

This has prompted outrage in the right-wing press, with claims that the university is “rewriting history” by making Captain Cook out to be an invader, and prompting such joyous tabloid headlines as “Nutty professors want to Cook the record books”.

Not everyone agrees. The Premier of Queensland, Annastacia Palaszczuk, commended the university’s guide, saying that: “For many years Australian schools and Australian institutions have not told the truth about the way in which Australia was settled. A lot of indigenous people lost their lives, there were massacres and the truth always must be told.”

It might be more apposite to say that the Aboriginal peoples “discovered” the Englishman when he landed on their shores. But that would be a euphemism.

For the arrival of these adventurers has almost always spelt disaster for indigenous populations across the globe. Most recognise that today in reference to Asia and Africa; defenders of empire are a dwindling, contrarian bunch. But rarely is the European conquest of North America talked of as an invasion. Why not?

Slavery is often referred to as America’s original sin, but the decimation of the Native American population by new diseases and what some historians consider genocide was surely an even greater evil. A Native American Apology Resolution was passed by Congress and signed by president Obama in 2009. Little, however, was made of it.