

Attention: March is a dangerous month for military operations in our region - Mehmet Ögütçü



There is a historical trend to start military operations in March. Evidence from Romans and American military planners of Pentagon show that March has been chosen as the “best month” to go to war. There must be a seasonal advantage in preparing all winter and engaging in the war before summer, in terms of the timing of military operations. If we think this way, I wonder what kind of new hot conflicts might be awaiting us in our region in March 2024?

Mars, the God of War

As highlighted by Michel Chossudovsky, who examined the wisdom of the wars in March, with the exception of the Afghanistan War (October 2001) and the 1990-91 Gulf War, all major military operations conducted by the US, NATO and their allies generally conducted in March. The month of March (*Idus Martiae* in Latin) is a day corresponding to March 15 (and incidentally also my birthday!) in the Roman calendar. It is also known as the day when Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, which we remember with the motto “You Too, Brutus.” Moreover, the month of March in the Roman Calendar is dedicated to Mars (Martius), the Roman God of War, where the month of March takes its name. For the Romans, March 23 was the day “on which the Romans celebrated the beginning of the military campaign and the season of warfare.” Homage was paid to Mars, the God of War, with festivals and feasts. For the Romans, March 23 was a major celebration known as the Tubilustrum. As part of these festivities celebrating the Roman God of War, the month March was devoted to military preparations.

This was so long ago. How does March, the month Romans defined as a “good time” to start new military operations, have anything to do with contemporary military doctrine today?

Pentagon’s Choice of March

It seems that March is still considered as the best time for military operations, at least for the Pentagon, the world’s largest military power. As in the heyday of the Roman Empire, the US Department of Defense has the authority to plan and implement a precise “timetable” of military operations. It so happens that Pentagon’s military planners often choose March for any war they contemplate.

The U.S. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing President Lyndon Johnson to send ground forces to Vietnam on March 8, 1965. And that

same day, 3,500 US Marines were sent to South Vietnam, marking the beginning of the American ground war.

NATO's war against Yugoslavia began on 24 March 1999 and lasted until 10 June 1999.

In 1991, the Gulf War against Iraq began on January 17. After a ceasefire was agreed and signed on 28 February, following the massacre of retreating soldiers and fleeing civilians on the Basra Road on 26/27 February, the US 24th Mechanized Infantry Division massacred thousands on 2 March.

The US led invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003, under the pretext that Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The US secret operation in Syria was launched on March 15, 2011, with an attack by Al Qaeda-linked mercenaries and death squads on the southern city of Deraa on the Jordanian border. Terrorists were involved in arson as well as the killing of civilians. This attack by terrorists was secretly supported from the very beginning by the USA, NATO and its Persian Gulf allies Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

NATO forces began bombing Libya on March 19, 2011. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted the first resolution on February 26, 2011. Later, on 17 March 2011, another UNSC Resolution (Resolution 1973) was adopted. The decision allowed the creation of a "no-fly zone" over Libya and "all necessary measures" to be taken "to protect the lives of civilians." Libya was bombed by NATO warplanes for nearly seven months, starting from March 19, 2011.

On March 25, 2015, the international coalition led by Saudi Arabia (and supported by the US) launched airstrikes against the Houthi armed groups in Yemen.

In the case of Russia, the invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022 (a week before March). On February 24, Vladimir Putin announced a “special military operation” against Ukraine. The war still continues, and a large-scale Russian attack is expected starting from March this year and extending into the summer.

In Turkish history, we don’t have that kind of March passion.

I gather that we don’t have war glorifications of March in Turkish history. The great attack launched by the Turkish army against the Greek forces started on August 26. The Turkish Army entered Izmir on September 9, and the Greek Army completely abandoned Anatolia on September 18. The Cyprus Peace Operation started on 20 July 1974. The PKK carried out its first attack in Eruh and Şemdinli on August 25, 1984. Turkish armed forces have been carrying out regular military operations throughout all year, irrespective of seasons and months, to combat the PKK. Therefore, March does not necessarily fit into Turkish military history. However, we should keep in mind that March has potential for military operations in our neighborhood, in which either the US or Russia will possibly play a leading role.

You never know, be alert and prepared.



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