Uh-Oh:

> Union minister Nitin Gadkari in a tweet has confirmed that India would ‘choke’ the water supply to Pakistan in light of the Pulwama attack. The move comes in the backdrop of the February 14 attack on CRPF convoy in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, which resulted in the death of 40 CRPF personnel.
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> India will divert water from eastern rivers and supply it to the people of Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, read Gadkari’s tweet. Under the Indus Waters Treaty, India shares the waters of the Beas and Sutlej rivers with Pakistan.

Now, this isn’t illegal: as the article points out, under the Indus Waters Treaty. a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, control over the water flowing in three “eastern” rivers of India – the Beas, the Ravi and the Sutlej with the mean flow of 33 million acre-feet (MAF) – was given to India. (See map0.

But this is in retaliation for the horrific terrorist attack last week in Pulwama, which killed 40 people and which was backed by jihadi militants given protection in Pakistan. It is a significant move, although it is hard to blame New Delhi on this: Islamabad has been giving aid and comfort to these jihadis for too long, and with impunity.

I am currently reading This Unquiet Land: Stories From India’s Fault Lines, by prominent Indian television journalist Bharka Dutt. Dutt details the intense and high-stakes diplomacy that Bill Clinton and National Security Advisor engaged in during 1999’s Kargil War. That nearly melted down into a nuclear conflict. Dutt wonders in the book how the powers will handle this the next time: “and there WILL be a next time.” It is here.

“Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over,” goes the old line. Here, water isn’t the goal: it is the weapon. And we will see more of this around the world in the coming years, as climate change puts severe pressure on already-burdened freshwater supplies, and nations will not be able to resist the temptation to use their access as leverage. If, of course, we make it that far.