

# What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine

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Dajabón river separating Haiti and the Dominican Republic

Ben Johnson -For over a week, the [border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti has been closed](#) due to a dispute over a canal being built on the Haitian side of the island. The canal, channeling water from the Massacre River, is meant to assist those affected by a drought in Haiti. The Dominican Republic's President, Luis Abinader, ordered the closure and has since deployed military forces to enforce it while maintaining that the closure will last "as long as necessary."

To better understand this dispute, one must look at what makes a boundary (a more precise term than the common usage of border). [Boundaries](#) are the lines that divide entities (e.g., governments and countries) and their territory. Thus, boundaries signal the geographic extent to which an entity has sovereignty. Boundaries are then made visible through flags, fences, posts, etc. Indeed, Abinader has begun construction on a [118-mile wall to separate Dominican Republic territory from Haitian](#). The Massacre or Dajabón River forms the northern part of the boundary between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, illustrating a problematic aspect of boundaries. Difficulties often arise when entities base boundaries on natural physical barriers like rivers or lakes. While a common practice, this becomes an issue because of the changing nature of natural features. If the path of a river changes, should the boundary too? In the case of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, a natural boundary like this becomes more complicated due to both countries inhabiting an island. Limited resources, like water, create constant tensions. How much one is allowed to pull from the river has remained a consistent source of discord because

both countries depend on its water for basic hydration and agriculture.

When discussing boundaries, territory becomes an important concept to understand. [Territory](#) concerns the space within boundaries. As mentioned, all the area within a territory is typically thought of as being within the sovereignty of an entity. One of the Dominican Republic's claims is that Haiti's government can no longer control their country—i.e., a lack of sovereignty. Some have asserted that Abinader's move to close the border is political, an effort to display toughness on migration. Whatever the reason, the closure will continue negatively affecting both countries' economies.

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