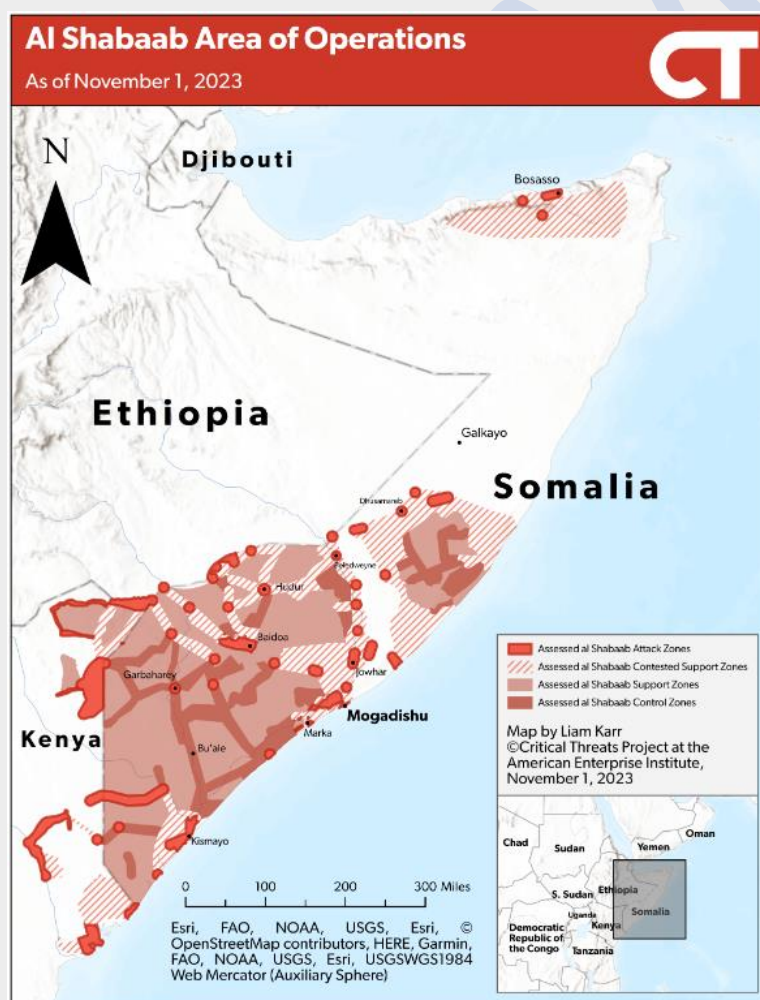


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**1. Al-Shabaab: growing from Somalia's ruins****Why in News?**

On August 2, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive device at the entrance to the Beach View Hotel on Lido Beach in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, which is often frequented by government officials, businesspersons and youth. Before the shock could abate, five attackers stormed the site and started shooting at civilians indiscriminately. By the time security officials had neutralised the attackers, at least 37 lives were lost and 210 were wounded. The strike was subsequently claimed by al-Shabaab, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, which has waged a war against the Somali government for the past 17 years.



Al-Shabaab has conducted similar strikes in the Horn of Africa. In March, the group had laid siege to another hotel in Mogadishu killing 27 people, including three members of parliament and three soldiers. The deadliest attack in the country's history was the double car bombing in October 2017 killing 358 people and injuring 228 in Mogadishu. The attacks have spilled over the border to Kenya too.

But as far as Somalia goes, al-Shabaab is merely a chapter in the nation's history that is fraught with authoritarianism, clan war, famine, piracy, corruption and resource crunch, all of which had prompted the U.S. based-The Fund for Peace to call the country in 2011, a failed state for a fourth year in a row. That is slowly changing

with the UN stating in 2021 that the former failed state is on a fragile path to progress.

### **On forming the state of Somalia**

From the seventh to the 19th century, Somalia and neighbouring regions were ruled by a series of Sultanates, with Islam's Sunni subset being the primary religion. The 19th century witnessed the arrival of colonial powers, and the region was shared between British, Italian and French forces — the first two taking up the lion's share of the area.

Upon the withdrawal of British and Italian forces from the northern and southern regions in 1960, the two regions came together and formed modern-day Somalia. Democracy prevailed for a brief time until 1969 when Siad Barre came to power through a military coup.

Siad Barre propounded an administrative policy called 'scientific socialism' through which he nationalised banks and insurance companies, promoted literacy and strengthened ties with the Soviet Union. Despite Somalis being a largely homogenous group, different clans had ruled the roost. However, Barre saw to it that loyalty to major clans such as Isaaq, Darood, Dir and Hawiye remained outlawed.

The first signs of the authoritarian leader's downfall emerged with the Ogaden war that Somalia fought with its neighbouring Ethiopia in 1977.

### **The Ogaden war**

Imperial European powers had gone into the Horn of Africa and drawn up arbitrary boundaries to carve out territories to suit their convenience. Much like what happened in other parts of the world, this process upended the lives of the natives, who were plucked from their societies and cultures and thrust into alien living conditions. Ogaden was no different. A portion of the region, which fell under the Christian-majority Ethiopia, was home to many Muslim Somalis.

Additionally, notwithstanding colonial legacy, a second factor contributed to the region's complicated history — the area was a breeding ground for Cold War politics. The conflict began in July of 1977 with Ethiopia acting as a U.S. ally and Somalia backed by the USSR.

But by the time the war ended in March 1978, Ethiopia and Somalia were receiving assistance from the USSR and the U.S. respectively.

Despite the initial gains, the war proved costly for Somalia as it had to retreat from the Ogaden region and grapple with the influx of Ogaden Somali refugees.

Depleted of finances and resources, Barre began to lose his grip on the country's administration. Certain policies did not sit well with some clans, who turned against each other. By 1991, Barre fled Somalia following an uprising by clans supported by Libya and Ethiopia. The northern part of the country proclaimed independence as Somaliland; and clan wars were rife, killing close to 3,00,000 Somalis in a year.

Whatever international food aid came Somalia's way was siphoned off by local gangsters and militia leaders.

The U.S., the UN and other international troops took turns coming into the country to fix the situation but to little effect. In October 1993, U.S. Marines tried to arrest the officers of one of the clan leaders, leading the militiamen to shoot down two U.S. Black Hawk Helicopters (depicted in the 2001 film *Black Hawk Down*). Trying to retrieve the helicopter crew cost 18 U.S. lives and led to 300 Somalian deaths.

Efforts to establish transitional governments also proved futile, so much so that by 2004, at least 14 attempts had been made to establish a central governing authority. Although a parliament came to power and elected Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as President in 2012, this did little to improve people's lives. Somalia follows a federal system of governance making the loyalty of clan leaders crucial. The hostility between the clans made it impossible to govern the country. The role of Ethiopia too has not gone unnoticed. It has been accused of meddling in Somalia's affairs trying to protect its interests.

### **The rise of al-Shabaab**

As a famine started spreading in many parts of the country, al-Shabaab, a militant group preaching the Salafist version of Islam, had spread its roots in Somalia by seizing Mogadishu in 2006.

Its origins can be traced back to the al-Ittihad al-Islamiya (AIAI), a militant group that gained prominence in the 1990s after the fall of Barre's regime. Its chief members were trained in West Asia and funded by the al-Qaeda.

However, hardline younger members of the AIAI sought a stricter Sharia rule and swore allegiance to the Islamic Courts Union, ultimately becoming its armed wing, al-Shabaab.

To win back Mogadishu from al-Shabaab, Ethiopia's help was sought by Somalia's transition government in 2006. Though the city was eventually retrieved, al-Shabaab's numbers started to swell because the operation was perceived as an invasion by a foreign force — a narrative that would be peddled by al-Shabaab in the future to rally support. Despite carrying out suicide attacks and terror strikes inside Somalia as well as in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, al-Shabaab draws legitimacy by positioning itself as an alternate form of governance for the people of its home country. The militant group has stepped in to fill the void left behind by a government machinery rife with corruption.

The Somali government, with the help of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army (SMA), managed to drive away al-Shabaab from Mogadishu and other port cities such as Kismayo and Barawe.

With the southern city of Jilib as its defacto capital, al-Shabaab relocated to the south and has now focused its activities in rural areas of Somalia where it offers protection services and plays mediator to disputes.

The terror group also obtains revenue from illicit charcoal trade.

The curtailed nature of al-Shabaab's activities and its confinement to rural areas have been largely hailed as victories of the armed forces. Even then, the occasional attacks planned by

them cost 4,000 lives between 2010 and 2020, making it surpass Boko Haram as Africa's biggest terror threat.

More importantly, these attacks land a psychological blow to a population that has not tasted peace in a long time.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Hindu

## 2. What is the process for designating senior advocates, how has it changed

### Why in News?

The Supreme Court recently designated 39 lawyers, including 10 women, as senior advocates.

Among those who received the designation are Indra Sawhney, who filed the case which led to the landmark 1992 SC ruling which placed a 50% ceiling for reservations, the Additional Advocate General of Punjab Shadan Farasat, BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj, and the Vice-President of the Bar Association of India Anindita Pujari.

These designations were given based on new guidelines which were delivered on May 12, 2023, by a three-judge Bench led by Justice S K Kaul in a case seeking modifications to the 2018 guidelines on how the 'senior advocate' designation is granted.



### What is a senior advocate?

Section 16 of the Advocates Act, 1961 prescribes two different classes of advocates, "senior advocates and other advocates". As Justice Kaul said in his May 2023 decision, the designation of senior advocate is "a mark of excellence to advocates who have distinguished themselves and have made a significant contribution to the development of the legal profession. It identifies advocates whose standing and achievements would justify an expectation...that they can provide outstanding services as advocates in the best interest of the administration of justice."

Section 16 also states that senior advocates may be subject to certain additional restrictions. For those designated by the SC, these restrictions can be found in the Supreme Court Rules, 2013. They are barred from filing a vakalatnama, appearing before a court without a junior or an advocate-on-record, doing drafting work, or directly accepting briefs for cases from clients.

### What do the latest guidelines for the designation of senior advocates say?

The Chief Justice of India, along with any other Supreme Court judge, can recommend in writing the name of an advocate for the designation.

The new guidelines prescribe the minimum age as 45 years to apply for the 'senior advocate' designation. This age limit may, however, be relaxed by the Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates (more on that later), the CJI, or a Supreme Court judge, if they have recommended an advocate's name. No minimum age was prescribed under the 2018 guidelines.

Applicants for the designation are graded out of 100 marks, with new guidelines reserving only 5 marks in total for the "publication of academic articles, experience of teaching assignments in the field of law," and "guest lectures delivered in law schools and professional institutions connected with law". Previously, 15 marks were set aside for publications.

On the other hand, the weightage given to reported and unreported judgements (excluding orders that do not lay down any principle of law) has increased from 40 to 50 points in the new guidelines.

### **What did the 2018 guidelines say? Why did they come into effect?**

In October 2018, the SC released a list of 'Guidelines to Regulate the Conferment of Designation of Senior Advocates'. The guidelines discouraged the system of 'voting by secret ballot', except in cases where it was "unavoidable". They also created a 'Committee for Designation of Senior Advocates' (henceforth, the Committee) which is chaired by the CJI and comprises the two senior-most SC judges, the Attorney General of India, and a "member of the Bar" nominated by the chair and other members.

The CJI or any other judge could recommend the name of an advocate for designation. Alternatively, advocates could submit their applications to the 'permanent secretariat' (henceforth, the Secretariat), which would evaluate them on various criteria including years of legal practice as an advocate, district judge, or a judicial member of an Indian tribunal.

These guidelines came into effect following an October 12, 2017 SC verdict by a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Ranjan Gogoi on a plea filed by Senior Advocate Indira Jaising for greater transparency in the designation process. Jaising, India's first woman senior advocate, had challenged the existing process as "opaque", "arbitrary," and "fraught with nepotism."

Prior to 2018, Section 16 of the Advocates Act, 1961, governed the appointment of senior advocates. It stated that "There shall be two classes of advocates, namely, senior advocates and other advocates", and allowed for a senior advocate designation "if the Supreme Court or a High Court" was of the opinion that by "virtue of his ability, standing at the Bar, or special knowledge or experience in law, he is deserving of such distinction." The Chief Justice and other judges made this designation.

The 2017 judgment made provisions for the establishment of the Secretariat, which would handle applications, publish proposals on the official website of the concerned court and invite suggestions, and subsequently forward applications to the Committee. The Committee would then interview a candidate, and make an overall evaluation based on a point system. After



approval, a candidate's name would be forwarded to the Full Court to decide on the basis of the majority. The Full Court could also recall the designation of a senior advocate.

### **Why were new guidelines issued in 2023?**

On February 16, 2023, the Centre filed an application for the modification of the guidelines before the SC. In its application, the Centre challenged the "point-based system", which awarded 40 per cent weightage to publications, personality, and suitability gauged through the interview. It argued that this system is subjective, ineffective, and dilutes the "esteem and dignity of the honour being conferred traditionally", citing the rampant circulation of "bogus" and "sham" journals where people could publish their articles without any academic evaluation of the contents and quality of the articles, by "paying a nominal amount".

Further, the Centre argued that the current requirements for designation are "extraneous" and have resulted in "ousting otherwise eligible candidates" based on factors that are "not germane to the issue of being designated as a Senior Advocate.

Lastly, the application sought to reinstate the rule of a simple majority by a secret ballot, where the judges can express their views about the suitability of any candidate "without any embarrassment," reasoning that the secret ballot will minimise campaigning for votes by lawyers.

However, the May 2023 ruling upheld the 2018 guidelines but reduced the number of marks awarded for publications from 15 to 5. The court also clarified that voting by secret ballot was meant to be used in exceptional circumstances, adding that if it has to be resorted to, the reasons for the same should be recorded.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

### **3. An Expert Explains: How James Webb Space Telescope has raised questions in cosmology**

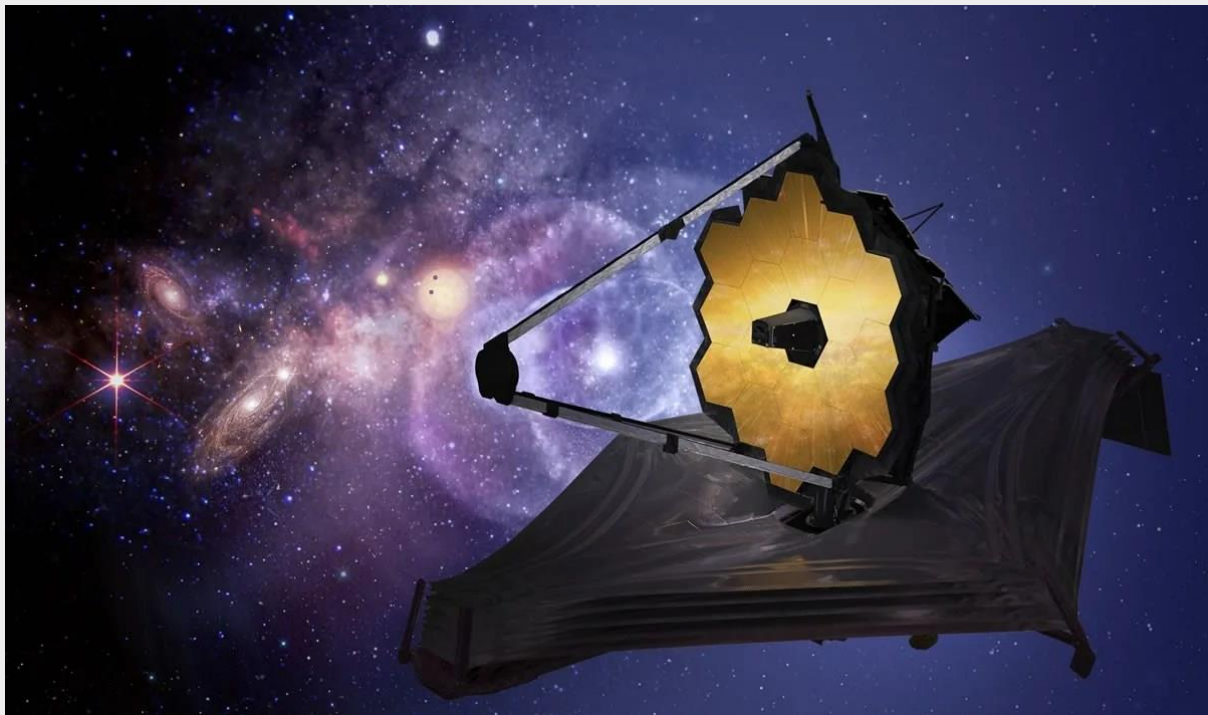
#### **Why in News?**

Images from the largest and most powerful telescope in space have dazzled everyone, but they have left astronomers rather nonplussed. The jigsaw puzzle of the history of the Universe is getting more difficult than ever to solve with the pieces that the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is gathering.

With its huge mirror — five times bigger than that of its predecessor, the Hubble Space Telescope — the JWST, which was launched on Christmas Day in 2021 and arrived at its destination, the Sun-Earth Lagrange point 2 in January 2022, has been peering at the early epochs in the history of the Universe, when the first galaxies had barely formed.

Its images were, however, very different from what astronomers had thought they would see. They had expected to find newborn galaxies — instead, the early phases of the Universe appear to be full of adult-sized galaxies. And if that is not enough of a puzzle, the rate at which

the Universe is expanding, as measured by the space telescope, appears to be at odds with other pieces of data.



### **Ways to measure expansion**

The rate of expansion of the Universe has been a subject of scientific debate for quite some time. Two different methods of determining the rate have yielded results that differ by as much as 10%.

One method is based on phenomena in the early Universe — which implies events at a great distance, because the light we see from distant objects started its journey a long time ago. The other method relies on local celestial objects — although 'local' means a region spanning billions of light years.

Some stars vary their brightness in a periodic manner, and the duration of this change tells us something about how bright they really are. From this, one can figure out their distance and, in turn, how the Universe has been expanding.

The new space telescope was expected to nail the reason for the mismatch between the results obtained by the two methods. But its measurements seem to have only increased the discrepancy. Its deeper inspection of the local method of measurement gives a rate of expansion that is somewhat faster than that based on early Universe measurements.

The question is, which method is more reliable?

The early Universe method relies on a relic radiation from the primeval epochs, when the Universe was hot. The radiation has now cooled down as the Universe has expanded, and has become a microwave 'hum' that pervades everything. If you make a fist, hundreds of photons from this relic radiation will pass through it every second!

A detailed analysis of this radiation can tell us how fast the Universe has been expanding. In other words, one method depends on how well we know our stars, and the other on how well we understand the history of the Universe.

### **‘Adults in a kindergarten’**

There have been problems with the early history of the Universe as well.

The space telescope was designed to peer at toddler galaxies. Galaxies such as our Milky Way contain roughly a hundred billion stars. But around 13 billion years ago, when the Universe was less than a tenth of its current age, small clumps of matter began to gather together and create suitable conditions for lighting up the first stars.

Those baby galaxies were supposed to be relatively small. But the data coming out of JWST seem to show full-bodied galaxies at the dawn of the Universe! Most of them seem to contain billions of stars. It has been as mind-boggling as, say, finding a bunch of adults playing in a kindergarten.

Some galaxies that JWST has imaged and analysed date back to when the Universe was barely a few hundred million years old. Yet, they seem to contain billions of majestically bright stars. They could have been exceptions, but then such objects should be rare — which they are not. Even if they are to be treated as exceptions, one would have to come up with an explanation for such exuberant formation of stars at the dawn of the Universe. Although astronomers still hope to find some explanation, even if one has to push the limits of astrophysical processes, some have begun to wonder if there was something wrong after all with our basic ideas of the Universe.

### **Crossroads of knowledge**

There is only one Universe. And we are a part of it. We can't change it, tweak it, or experiment with it. Which makes it unlike any other topic of research in science. Yet, beginning with the last century, equipped with Einstein's theory of gravitation and large telescopes, physicists made ambitious attempts to study and explain the Universe.

Over the decades, a 'standard model' of the Universe has emerged, which is appealing in its simplicity, and also flexible enough to accommodate complexity. Based on it, a history of the Universe has been sketched out — barring the very first moment, which remains elusive.

However, the so-called 'standard model' has needed quick fixes in more than one aspect. Faced with a mismatch between the inventory of matter and the observed pull of gravity, scientists have invented "dark matter", although no one has any idea what it is made of. The Universe also appears to be in a hurry while expanding. In order to explain this, we have brought in "dark energy" — but we remain clueless about its nature.

Some astronomers have begun to think that the gaps in our understanding may not be just a matter of details — and may warrant a comprehensive revision of what we think of the Universe. There have been occasions in the history of science when scientists have held on to existing ideas by introducing patchwork to accommodate contradictions between theory and



observations. The Greeks for example, kept introducing complexities to the orbits of planets around the Earth, disregarding suggestions that their basic geocentric model of the Universe was wrong.

Scientists sometimes behave as though their conventional model is the only possibility, and ignore the conflicting measurements, until a tectonic shift changes everything. It is not possible to predict how, if at all, a paradigm shift will take place. Only time will tell if the puzzling results from the space telescope will be explained away by another patchwork, by inventing another 'dark' something, or if they will lead to a rethink of cosmic history.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express