CURRENT AFFAIRS

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RUSSIA OPERATION UNTHINKABLE

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF " RUSSIA OPERATION UNTHINKABLE.". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

- Recently, a Moscow military expert claims Russia plans to disable the nuclear deterrents of Britain and France 'within one day' if World War Three breaks out. The Putin regime is also developing £330,000 mobile nuclear shelters for major cities to protect key individuals in the event of an apocalyptic war. "Within one day, we carry out Operation Unthinkable. We eliminate the nuclear potentials of Britain and France," The Mirror quoted Dr Yuri Baranchik as saying.
- The Russian tactics in 'Operation Unthinkable' would "deprive Europe of its military-geopolitical status", said Dr Yuri Baranchik, while outlining Russia's tactics if World War 3 unfolds.

He further commented that such measures would effectively "neutralise the nuclear capabilities of Britain and France", eliminating any leverage the NATO alliance might have over Russia in the

European theatre. By hindering the nuclear forces of France and the wider European region, NATO would be left with limited tactical and US nuclear arsenals. Utilising these, however, would lead to the "annihilation of America", as pointed out by the Russian military analyst.

BACKGROUNDS OF THE OPERATION UNTHINKABLE:

- Operation Unthinkable was a set of two related possible future war plans developed by the British Chiefs of Staff Committee against the USSR in 1945, at the end of World War II in Europe. The plans were never implemented, and their existence remained secret until 1998.
- The primary objectives were to impose "the will of the United States and British Empire upon Russia" and ensure a "square deal for Poland" through military action.
- The development of the plans took place in May 1945, coinciding with the end of the conflict in Europe following the downfall of Nazi Germany. Churchill was wary of the Soviet Union's motives in Europe and the possibility of its expansionist agenda. He aimed to prepare for any situation from worsening ties with the Soviet Union.
- The strategic proposals were crafted by the Joint Planning Staff of the British Armed Forces, taking into account two potential strategies:
1. **Offensive Strategy:** This involved launching a preemptive strike against Soviet troops in Germany, aiming to enforce the objectives of the United States and the British Empire on Russia. This approach was based on the anticipation that the Soviet Union would ally with Japan should hostilities with the Western Allies begin.
2. **Defensive Strategy:** In this scenario, British military forces would prepare to repel a Soviet offensive aiming for the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, particularly when American troops withdraw from Europe.
- Neither of the plans was ever implemented. The geopolitical landscape quickly shifted towards the Cold War, focusing on political and ideological confrontation rather than immediate military conflict.
- Operation Unthinkable highlights early Western apprehensions about the Soviet Union, foreshadowing the Cold War. It also illustrates Churchill's foresight and willingness to consider extreme measures to counter potential Soviet aggression.

Operation Unthinkable is an intriguing hypothetical scenario in military history. It highlights the intricate and uncertain dynamics of the period right after World War II. It emphasizes how delicate alliances were and how quickly relationships transitioned from wartime cooperation to postwar competition, marking the beginning of the Cold War.

WAY FORWARD:

- Facilitate direct negotiations between the conflicting parties, possibly mediated by neutral or respected international figures or organisations (e.g., the United Nations). Use backchannel communications to build trust and address sensitive issues that may not be suitable for public discussion.
- International organisations such as the UN, OSCE, or regional bodies should be engaged to mediate the conflict. Involve influential countries or leaders who can act as intermediaries.
- Impose targeted sanctions on Russia's key sectors and backers of the war, coordinate internationally to close loopholes, offer aid for peace, and suggest lifting sanctions for concrete peace steps.

- Provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations to alleviate suffering and prevent further destabilisation. Establish and support humanitarian corridors to ensure safe civilian passage and aid delivery.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION:

Q. Discuss how the war affected global health and access to healthcare. How does the international community respond to wars and their aftermath?

Amit Pradhan

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLE

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "**WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLE**". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "**SOCIAL ISSUES**" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

Why in the News?

LinkedIn's Economic Graph data indicates that the overall representation of women in the workforce has risen over the years. Despite this, advancing women into senior and leadership positions have encountered several challenges. Notably, progress has stagnated since 2022 and has even seen a decline in 2024.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE REPORT:

- The overall workforce participation of women has increased from 23.9% in 2016 to 26.8% in 2024, although there was a slight decrease of 0.5 percentage points between 2022 and 2024.
- Women in senior leadership roles rose from 16.6% in 2016 to 18.7% in 2023 but fell to 18.3% in 2024.
- Despite a strong presence at entry levels (28.7%) and senior independent contributor levels (29.53%), women's representation significantly drops at managerial positions (18.59%) and continues to decline in higher leadership roles, with 20.1% at director roles, 17.4% at Vice President roles, and 15.3% at C-suite positions.
- Sectors with the highest representation of women in leadership include Education (30%), Government Administration (29%), Administrative and Support Services (23%), and Hospitals and Healthcare (23%).
- The lowest representation of women in leadership is found in Construction, Oil, Gas, Mining, and Utilities (11%), Wholesale and Manufacturing (12%), and Accommodation and Food Services (15%).

WHY HAS WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION DECLINED IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS?

- **COVID-19 Pandemic**: The pandemic disproportionately affected women, particularly due to increased caregiving responsibilities. The hiring rate of women into senior leadership roles has notably decreased due to the pandemic. The percentage of leadership positions held by women

has fallen to 32%, matching the level seen during the peak of the pandemic in 2020. This decline spans multiple industries, including Technology, Media and Information, and Professional Services.

- **Economic Recession**: Economic downturns often lead to budget cuts and restructuring within companies. In such scenarios, leadership roles may be consolidated or reduced, impacting women's advancement opportunities. A study examining economic responses to crises in developing regions discovered that economic growth shocks could cause a rapid decrease in female employment by 3 percentage points within the first five years following the shock, with these effects enduring over time.
- **Inflation and Cost of Living Increases**: Rising costs can affect women's ability to invest in their careers, such as through continued education or relocation for job opportunities. Financial pressures can also lead women to prioritise immediate income over long-term career growth.
- **Workplace Discrimination and Bias**: Economic stress can exacerbate existing biases and discrimination in the workplace. During times of economic uncertainty, companies may revert to traditional hiring and promotion practices, which can disadvantage women.
- **Childcare and Education Disruptions**: Continued disruptions in childcare and education due to economic pressures can make it difficult for women to balance work and family responsibilities, affecting their ability to take on and succeed in leadership roles.
- **Labour Market Changes**: Shifts in the labour market, such as the rise of gig and contract work, can disproportionately impact women. These roles often lack the stability and career progression opportunities needed for advancement to leadership positions.

CONSTRAINTS THAT AFFECT WOMEN'S PROGRESS

Gender Stereotypes and Bias:
- **Leadership Traits**: Leadership traits are often stereotypically associated with men, such as assertiveness and decisiveness, while women are stereotyped as being more nurturing and cooperative. This bias can lead to the perception that women are less suited for leadership roles.
- **Double Standards**: Women in leadership roles are often judged more harshly than their male counterparts. Behaviours that are praised in men may be criticised in women.

Workplace Culture:
- **Exclusion from Informal Networks**: Women may be excluded from informal networks or "**old boys' clubs**" where important business decisions and career advancement opportunities are discussed.
- **Lack of Mentorship and Sponsorship**: Women often have less access to mentors and sponsors who can advocate for their career advancement.

Work-Life Balance Challenges:
- **Family Responsibilities**: Women are more likely to take on the majority of caregiving responsibilities, which can impact their availability and flexibility for career advancement opportunities.
- **Flexible Work Policies**: Lack of supportive policies for work-life balance, such as flexible work hours and parental leave, can hinder women's career progression.

Organisational Practices:

- **Promotion and Pay Disparities**: Women often face disparities in promotions and pay. They may be passed over for promotions in favour of less qualified male colleagues.
- **Bias in Performance Evaluations**: Performance evaluations may be biased, with women's contributions being undervalued or overlooked.
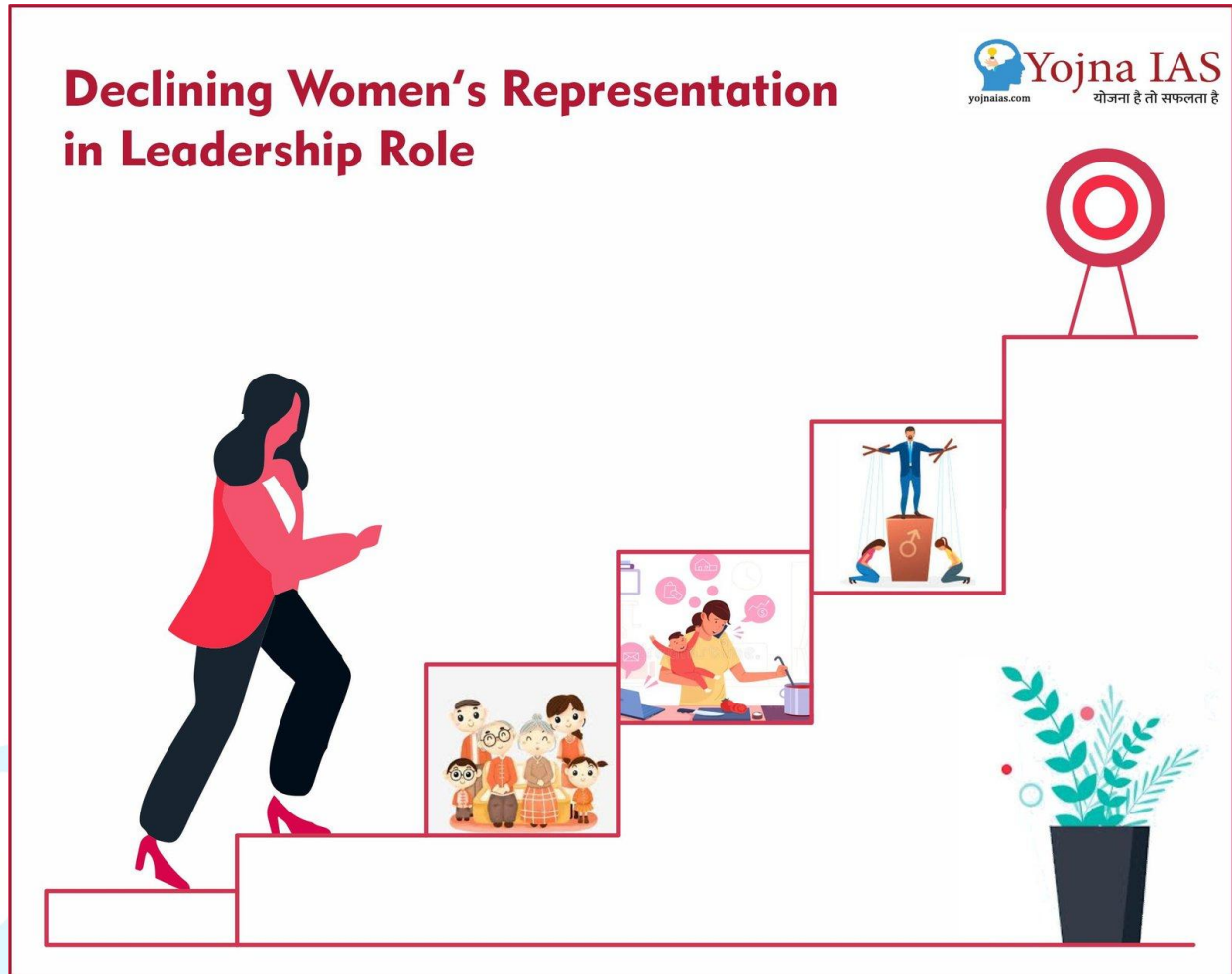
CORRECTIVE MEASURES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

ORGANIZATIONAL MEASURES

- **Inclusive Recruitment and Promotion Practices:**
- **Blind Recruitment:** Implement blind recruitment processes to reduce unconscious bias.
- **Transparent Promotion Criteria:** Ensure that promotion criteria are transparent and based on merit and performance rather than subjective assessments.
- **Diverse Hiring Panels:** Use diverse hiring and promotion panels to mitigate bias.
- **Leadership Development Programs:**
- **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs that pair women with senior leaders who can provide guidance and support.
- **Leadership Training:** Provide leadership training programs specifically tailored for women to develop necessary skills and confidence.
- **Work-Life Balance Support:**

- **Flexible Work Policies:** Offer flexible working hours, remote work options, and job-sharing arrangements.
- **Parental Leave:** Provide equitable parental leave policies that support both men and women.
- **Childcare Support:** Offer on-site childcare facilities such as creche facilities or childcare subsidies.

POLICY MEASURES
- **Legislation and Regulation:**
- **Gender Quotas:** Implement gender quotas for leadership positions in both public and private sectors.
- **Equal Pay Laws:** Enforce laws that mandate equal pay for equal work to reduce the gender pay gap as mandated by the Constitution.
- **Incentives for Gender Diversity:**
- **Tax Benefits:** Offer tax incentives to companies that demonstrate significant progress in promoting women to leadership roles.
- **Public Recognition:** Recognize and publicly reward companies that excel in gender diversity through awards and certifications.

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIETAL MEASURES
- **STEM Education Initiatives:**
- **Encouraging Girls in STEM:** Promote STEM education for girls from an early age to build a pipeline of female talent in high-demand fields.
- **Scholarships and Grants:** Provide scholarships and grants specifically for women pursuing higher education and leadership training.
- **Awareness Campaigns:**
- **Public Awareness:** Conduct public awareness campaigns to challenge and change societal norms and stereotypes about women in leadership.
- **Role Models and Mentors:** Highlight successful female leaders as role models and mentors to inspire and encourage other women.

Prelims Based Question
Q. Consider the following statements:
1. The overall workforce participation of women has increased consistently since the last decade.
2. The education sector employs the highest representation of women in leadership positions.
Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a). 1 Only
(b). 2 Only
(c). Both 1 and 2
(d). Neither 1 nor 2
ANSWER: B

Mains Based Question
Q. **What are the social and economic constraints that led to lower representation of women in higher leadership positions? What could be the corrective measures to address this persisting Glass Ceiling phenomenon?**

Vikas