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The Difference between Power and Force

**You can be a woman – loving, inclusive and feminine but also firm and powerful –
who follows her own truth**

By Shari Arison

International Women's Day presents a fine opportunity to think about all the topics connected with advancing the status of women in our society, and I'll use this opportunity to try and shed some light on these topics from a slightly different point of view.

One of the most important developments of the past century was the recognition of women's right to equality. In today's world, even if it has not yet happened in practice, there is a general consensus regarding the necessity of ensuring equal rights for women, such as equal pay for equal work and so on. But in this article I would like to address the complementary relation between men and women – a complementary relation that is inherent in the creation of the human race.

As a woman, I know that the power of women is a power that is inclusive, embracing, loving and capable of providing unconditional love. Male power works along parallel tracks and complements female power. When human society is advancing in a correct and balanced manner, it is due to the combination of these two types of power. I recommend to women who are interested in advancing themselves that they should connect with that same female power whose inherent nature will propel them to the heights of their aspirations.

When women try to adopt characteristics that modern society considers to be male traits, they are liable to be perceived as domineering rather than powerful.

In my companies and initiatives, whether in the realm of business or of philanthropy, I make a conscious effort to engage both women and men. My experience shows that every person, and also each gender, has its own uniqueness. And the combination, the synergy, between all the people with their unique characteristics is a goal I am striving to reach, confident that this is what will move the entire system forward.

I think that every woman can advance herself, but the concept that women's empowerment must be accomplished through force and dominance is mistaken. It's possible to be a woman – soft, loving, inclusive, feminine – while at the same time being powerful and following her own truth without giving in when it comes to her just principles. I believe that in the long run, this will both preserve the balance and lead to advancement. This is because women and men see things in different ways and their capabilities (at least, in some areas) are different; thus, in proper equilibrium, men and women complete and enhance each other.

In the Arison Group, my business and philanthropic group, I have promoted many women but this was not due to any feminist agenda. I did not want to promote women because they were women; I promoted women in my Group because they deserved to be promoted. The women I promoted are women with proven abilities, with professional expertise. Intelligent women who work very hard. And they also bring to the system traits in which women especially excel, such as loyalty and intuition – and as such, they bettered and improved the system, just as men who were promoted due to their abilities and talents improved it, too.

Yes, I know that we women need a great deal of courage and firmness in order to advance ourselves in a world that is mainly controlled by men. It is forbidden for us to allow others turn us into victims, and it is our duty to stand up for our rights steadfastly and assiduously – but not through dominance and force.

At this point, I would like to stress the difference between force and power. Force comes from a combative place, where women are fighting for their place in a man's world. Female power, however, comes from within, from a woman's most basic and innermost place – feminine intuition, the ability to see the larger picture, the caring, the empathy, the softness.

Power and force are two different, even contradictory, concepts. Force means to always go up against something, expressed in fighting, in war. Power, on the other hand, is inner strength, which goes with the truth that a person not only knows, but also feels. And I am certain that in the long run, the use of power leads to welcome and effective results, much more so than the use of force.

Thus, on International Women's Day, I call upon all women: Instead of thinking about what we don't have, let's recall how far we have come. Let's think about where we want to go, and how to get there – with goodness, with mutual understanding, with balance and with love. There's no need to declare war on the male gender so that we can move forward and attain our goals.

I believe that everything rests in our own hands. All we have to do is to want, to know and to understand, to take responsibility and to set out on the path. And most important of all: to remember that with the right combination of knowledge and awareness, the world is open to each and every one of us, and there's enough room for all of us.

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