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Sigmund Freud once mentioned the defense offered by a man who was accused by his neighbor of having returned a kettle in a damaged condition. In the first place, he had returned the kettle undamaged; in the second place it already had holes in it when he borrowed it; and in the third place, he had never borrowed it at all.

That man's name?

Dick Cheney.

On "Morning Joe" on [MSNBC](https://www.msnbc.com) on Thursday, the former Vice President claimed that the intelligence used to invade Iraq had been sound and accurate; the faulty intelligence was all Bill Clinton's fault; the invasion didn't do any damage but rather it was the Iraqis who damaged Iraq; and any invasion causes horrific things to happen, that just comes with the territory.

This incoherence was interspersed with gossip about Cheney's marriage and his friends and his whole lovable social self. That lie may have overshadowed the more serious ones. When in the hell did Cheney become respectable, much less lovable? But that's a distraction. Cheney's crimes have long been [catalogued](#) .

Joe Scarborough began his Cheney interview by asking, not why did you commit so many crimes and abuses, but how did you, dear Dick, suffer from having the image of Darth Vader imposed on you? Cheney replies that he had fun wearing a Darth Vader mask. But listen carefully for the Freudian slip: he says he wore it in the President's office, not the VICE President's office.

Cheney claims he didn't transform into Darth Vader, and of course he didn't. Cheney was an immoral power-mad neocon for decades who consistently favored presidential prerogatives and aggressive militarism. But Cheney claims that what changed was that a terrorist act became an act of war rather than a crime. Did it do that all on its own?

Cheney slips in his usual baseless defense of torture and related abuses as having served some useful purpose. Scarborough does not follow up on that claim. Instead, he asks about Colin Powell's comments on Cheney's book. Nice and gossipy. But Lawrence Wilkerson's more serious comments on the same topic, including his expression of willingness to testify against Cheney in court, go unmentioned.

Cheney then claims the Iraq lies were well-intended mistakes and basically accurate at the same time. Content with this, Scarborough focuses in on DC social scene changes over the decades. That's journalism!

Mike Barnicle, a SERIOUS journalist, then asks Cheney if he regrets the death of a U.S. soldier in a humvee that was operating in Iraq without proper armor. This is a question along the lines of "Why did the military waste \$60 billion in Iraq?" These talking heads are not 60 seconds from the topic of the lies that launched an illegal and immoral war that killed hundreds of thousands of people, almost none of them Americans, and Barnicle wants to know why the humvees weren't better armored. Wednesday's [news](#) of U.S. troops having murdered Iraqi children gets no mention. This is breakfast table reporting for goodness sake! And yet, even with the softball question about the humvee armor, Cheney makes excuses and points out that things like that just happen in wars.

Well, exactly. But why do the wars happen?

Finally Scarborough asks Cheney why the U.S. military invaded Iraq, and Cheney says it was the right thing to do. He paints it as defensive. We attacked an unarmed impoverished nation halfway around the globe IN DEFENSE. Cheney even regurgitates a long-debunked claim about Mohamed Atta meeting with Iraqi officials. Next, Mika Brzezinski asks Cheney about the war lies, and Cheney blames Clinton. Now, I'm no fan of Clinton, and he told plenty of his own lies and engaged in plenty of power abuses tied to wars and military actions, but the fixing of the facts around the policy on Iraq was a major operation created after Clinton was gone. On this, Scarborough and Brzezinski had no follow up questions.

Instead, Barnicle helpfully turned to the topic of moving troops early out of Afghanistan and into preparation for war in Iraq. Cheney dishonestly suggested that no troops were moved to Iraq until a year and a half later. Then Cheney claims the Iraqis are the ones who did all the damage in Iraq. And on that note, Scarborough insists on chattering about Cheney's marriage, while Brzezinski insists on hearing about Cheney's sedated dreams of Italian villas.

Cheney admitted in this interview that his vice presidential role was unique. But that's not actually an argument for buying his book. It's an argument for amending our Constitution to include a ban on vice presidents exercising executive, as opposed to legislative, power.

The trouble is that there's little point in amending our laws until we start enforcing them. Dick Cheney is a human advertisement for the absence of the rule of law in the United States. Wilkerson thinks Cheney is bluffing because he is scared of being prosecuted. I think Cheney knows that could only happen abroad. He is safe here because the Justice Department answers to Obama, and Obama is protecting Cheney because Obama is continuing similar crimes and abuses.

If Obama were to allow Attorney General Eric Holder to enforce our laws against Dick Cheney, Obama might very well save his own electoral prospects. But he would put himself at risk of future prosecution. The question of whether we will have the rule of law becomes the question of whether Obama wants to trade four years of power for decades in prison. That's not how it is supposed to work.