

# CHENEY'S METHOD

There's a remarkable paragraph close to the start of Barton Gellman and Jo Becker's story on Cheney today:

Cheney is not, by nearly every inside account, the shadow president of popular lore. Bush has set his own course, not always in directions Cheney preferred. The president seized the helm when his No. 2 steered toward trouble, as Bush did, in time, on military commissions. Their one-on-one relationship is opaque, a vital unknown in assessing Cheney's impact on events. The two men speak of it seldom, if ever, with others. But officials who see them together often, not all of them admirers of the vice president, detect a strong sense of mutual confidence that Cheney is serving Bush's aims.

Consider the logic of the paragraph. Cheney is not the shadow president, they say. Bush has taken (some) actions independent of Cheney, they say. Cheney is implementing Bush's goals, they say. But then they say, "Their one-on-one relationship is opaque, a vital unknown in assessing Cheney's impact on events." None of the other claims made in the paragraph stand in the presence of that fact. So long as no one knows what happens between Bush and Cheney, we can never say whether Cheney is serving Bush's aims or Bush is serving Cheney's.

But the article does provide a great deal of meat to the skeleton understanding of how Cheney operates. I'd like to look at what the story implies, but doesn't say.