The what, why, and how of journalistic objectivity

I. What is journalistic objectivity?

A. As principle:
   1. "Scientific," factual orientation
   2. Neutrality (which may or may not be "fair and balanced") or nonpartisanship

B. As practice:
   1. Two sides to any story (rarely any more than that)
   2. Focus on "facts"
      a) Easily knowable numbers and details (E.g., types of fighter planes to be used in a battle, but not the question of whether or not Saddam Hussein has WMD's)
      b) Quotes as facts (which jives with the "two sides to any story" practice)
      c) Statements by official sources treated as facts

II. What is its function?

A. Proponents say it's to relay truth

B. Skeptics say:
   1. It helps define journalism as an expert profession
   2. It helps distinguish journalists from parajournalists
   3. It works as a strategic ritual that supports journalists against opposing forces (e.g., their bosses, politicians, etc.)
   4. It makes journalism subject to dominant power relations in society