Democratization unfolds to a global audience today, invoking all sorts of international relations. International observers even displace actual voters as the election legitimizing force, in the process elevating policies of other countries into quid pro quo instruments, making them yet another source of electoral legitimacy. Not surprisingly, the arena for negotiating democracy and democratizing processes themselves also shift from the domestic legislature, or any other domestic fora, into an international setting. For at least three reasons, the shift is profound: (a) it widens the audience, increases safeguards, converts routine politics into brinkmanship exercises, and ultimately dilutes the fundamental voter-politician bond in favor of an entrepreneurial politician-manager relationship; (b) it streamlines new or transitional democracies with mature democracies, creating pressures for one-size-fits-all outcomes, even though the number of obstacles and expectations constantly increases; and (c) because local peculiarities shape electoral values, methods, dynamics, and institutions differently, when the end-product diverges from the one-size-fits-all model, complaints of democracy or democratization falling short arises. In short, democracy of whatever stripes seems to be acquiring a sine qua non orientation rather than its staple quid pro quo format.

Negotiating democracy/democratization internationally expands not only the electoral scope but also the checks and balances. Political leaders of neophyte democracies may be pushed to the edge from satisfying expectations, to the point of having to worry more about facilitators and arbitrators in negotiations than those who actually cast votes. What is promised to external negotiators cannot be promised to domestic voters, and vice versa. If the politician reneges abroad but delivers at home, he or she must then trade-off between domestic popularity and external ostracism In this sense, then, placing elections or democratization on any external agenda increases obligations the new practitioner may not be able to fulfill.

Even if he or she can, a second difficulty arises. By satisfying external criteria, the politician may end up replicating electoral processes,
and thereby electoral systems. This might not pose a problem, and in fact could easily appear as a sign or symbol of modernization. If, however, domestic voting practices and habits have to be reoriented, what seems like maladjustment might actually disguise a cultural shock. Voting, for example, is an individualized experience consistent with cultures promoting individualism, such as in the west, but in the collective cultures across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, such behavior is not easily instilled as quickly as electoral monitors from abroad would like. If, indeed, the adjustment is made, over time, the practice of discussing the vote with an elder or a patron in collective cultures may eventually be threatened or displaced by the new individualized behavior, thus opening the door as much to cultural adjustment as to flux or evaporation. Introducing formal political parties where informal associations or movements have been the norm adds to the confusion. Indigenous groups particularly face this nightmarish prospect every time an election comes around, in the process slowly finding their own norms eroding on every occasion.

Finally, much is being said of late of democratic breakdowns or reversals. If they reflect the above two problems, the question arises if such categorization is indeed accurate when democracy is placed or projected in zero-sum terms.

_A Tale of Two Negotiating Tables_

Both Afghanistan and Iraq sought a new order once conflict ceased. Given the repressed past leading up to the conflict, democracy was made the catalyst and the goal. Yet, as natural as the hope was, it was not automatic. On the one hand, various vested interests of the old order had to be transformed, even eliminated, on the other, the appropriate inclusive approach adopted had only been done previously through force, if at all. Overriding these were the interests of the United States in democratizing both countries, how to begin the process, who to rely upon, what methods to utilize, and why the urgency needed quick articulation and dissemination demanding immediate attention. Both experiments unfolded with plenty of parallels and convergences, but as the nuts and bolts of democratization were addressed, divergences and differences dominated.

Table 5.1 shows these parallels and convergences. Although Afghanistan’s conflict won more global legitimacy than Iraq’s, both sprang