This paper looks at the important role civil society organisations can play during election campaigns through a case study of the Respect party in the UK. Formed in 2004, it has so far managed to elect an MP and a number of local councillors despite an electoral system that effectively penalises minor parties. An overview of the party’s development and electoral progress is presented as well an explanation of the specific context in which it has achieved success in areas of the country such as East London and Birmingham. The paper argues that close relations with civil society can be a significant asset to minor parties such as Respect, especially in constituencies with a large ethnic minority population where civil society ties often tend to be stronger. Constituencies with high numbers of ethnic minorities have always represented ‘safe seats’ for the Labour party. The paper details how in recent years the Respect party has played a key role in drastically reducing this support, particularly amongst Muslim voters. It is argued that relationships with civil society organisations have been one of the crucial factors in helping Respect to achieve its electoral success. As a party that evolved directly from a social movement, it could rely on the pre-existing networks that had been built up with various sections of civil society as a solid base for support. It has also been active in cultivating links with mosques, faith-based organisations, community groups and trade unions. These organisations appear to be central to the party’s current strategy even though such over-reliance may limit any further development of the party outside its current strongholds.
Introduction

This paper seeks to address the first main question posed by this workshop: what constitutes parties’ relationship with civil society? Through a case study of the Respect party in Britain it attempts to analyse the connection it maintains with certain elements of civil society, in particular faith-based organisations, community groups, social movements and trade unions. The central claim of the paper is that these relationships have been a crucial factor in helping the party to achieve some notable (albeit limited) electoral success. As the relationship between civil society and political parties has been somewhat neglected by scholars of European politics, this paper attempts to contribute to filling this gap by looking at the role civil society organisations play during election campaigns. Such organisations are part of the ‘ever more vocal organized and individual actors who operate in the campaign environment independently of the parties and candidates’ (Schmitt-Beck & Farrell 2008: 13). They therefore often constitute an important resource for parties during times of electoral competition. In Britain, this is particularly relevant in certain constituencies where parties engage in ‘ethnic politics’ and vie for the favour of certain civil society organisations which are connected to a particular ethnic and/or religious community. This practice has to some extent been in place for many years but has recently become even more pertinent with the search to capture a supposed ‘Muslim vote’. This paper examines how this phenomenon plays itself out within the borough of Tower of Hamlets in East London, which has the largest percentage of Muslim residents in the country due to a specific history of chain migration from Bangladesh. As part of London’s ‘East end’ it has been politically dominated by the Labour party which could traditionally count on the support of the Bangladeshi community (Eade 1989, Glynn 2008). The paper details how the Respect party has, through its links with civil society, managed to drastically reduce Labour’s support in this area and achieve representation both within the local council and also in Westminster. The empirical evidence for the paper is drawn from a series of semi-structured interviews with Respect councillors who have been elected to Tower Hamlets council as well as election material produced by the party. Additional material obtained from newspapers, party websites and other publications has also been used to inform the analysis.

It has of course been famously argued that the cartelisation of the major parties has led to them removing themselves from the concerns of civil society (Katz & Mair 1995). This does however appear to have provided a space for minor parties to fill, particularly at the local level. Minor parties in Britain have always been disadvantaged because of the simple plurality voting system in place for most elections as well as their lack of finance and organisation which are required for sustaining credible election campaigns. However, support for minor parties is growing,
particularly in second-order elections (Copus et al 2009). Britain appears to be slowly moving towards multi-party politics even though the electoral system has managed to protect the positions of larger parties from further losses (Lynch 2007). Given this unfavourable situation, Respect’s ability to breakthrough has been all the more remarkable and also testifies to the importance of its relationship with elements of civil society. It is the only minor party to have gained representation in parliament and is aiming to add two more seats at the next general election.\(^1\) The paper is divided into three sections; the first presents a history of the party and an examination of its electoral performance, it then details the specific dynamics at play within ‘ethnic politics’ before finally explaining how civil society organisations have helped Respect to gain support in the local community and representation in both local and national political institutions.

A brief history of RESPECT and its electoral performance

The movement to oppose the invasion of Iraq that coalesced around the Stop the War Coalition (SWC) led to the largest public demonstration in British history on 15\(^{th}\) February 2003.\(^2\) The anti-war movement was crucial in the politicisation of a new generation of young people, especially amongst British Muslims (Peace 2008). ‘RESPECT – The Unity Coalition’\(^3\) (hereafter Respect) was the direct result of this movement, and involved many of its most prominent figures. The unprecedented success of the movement coupled with widespread disappointment of many traditional Labour party supporters made the idea of forming an alternative party particularly attractive. This idea gained further credence when Labour lost a series of council seats in local elections in Birmingham and Leicester in May 2003 as well as a by-election in the previously safe constituency of Brent East in North West London in the September.\(^4\) The project to form a party was spearheaded by MP George Galloway after he was expelled from the Labour party in October 2003.\(^5\) Another significant component was the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) whose leaders were very active in the SWC.\(^6\) As well as providing an outlet to voters angered by the war in Iraq, Respect also aimed to federate all those to the left of the Labour party. In this sense it was the

\(^1\) Following Copus et al (2009), the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties and the Northern Irish parties are not considered as minor parties. Neither are independents such as Independent Kidderminster Hospital and Health Concern which elected an MP in 2001 and 2005 as well as a number of local councillors.

\(^2\) http://www.stopwar.org.uk

\(^3\) ‘RESPECT’ is a recursive acronym standing for Respect, Equality, Socialism, Peace, Environmentalism, Community, and Trade Unionism. http://www.therespectparty.org


\(^5\) Galloway was initially suspended by the party in May 2003 and at the tribunal in October was found guilty of four of the five charges of bringing the party into disrepute (notably encouraging British troops to refuse to obey orders in Iraq). ‘Galloway expelled by Labour’, BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3205889.stm

\(^6\) The SWP is a Trotskyist party and the largest organisation on the far left in Britain, see http://www.swp.org.uk
successor to the Socialist Alliance electoral list, which had been an abject failure, even by the low expectations of the British far left. Respect was founded in January 2004 and attempts were made to create an alliance with the Green Party but negotiations were unsuccessful. The decision to then field candidates against the Greens led to the resignation of one of the most prominent founding members, journalist and environmental campaigner George Monbiot. The party was widely derided by many in the media as just another single-issue party destined to quickly disappear from the electoral landscape.

Soon after its formation, Respect activists quickly turned their attention to the upcoming local and European elections in June of that year. The party sought to position itself as an authentic left-wing alternative to Labour, although its electoral strategy was largely based on targeting disenchanted Muslim voters dismayed by the government’s decision to invade Iraq. This electoral pragmatism, coupled with limited financial resources, has meant that since its inception the party has generally, but not exclusively, presented itself in areas with a high concentration of Muslim voters such as East London, Birmingham, Leicester, and certain areas of Yorkshire and Lancashire. Respect’s leaders and supporters were well aware that a significant number of Muslim voters would be willing to switch their allegiance from Labour. Election material in many areas specifically projected Respect as ‘the party for Muslims’ (RESPECT 2004c) and focussed not only on the Iraq war but also anti-terrorism legislation brought in by the government. However, at no point did it ever consider itself to be a Muslim political party in the same vein as the failed Islamic Party of Britain (IPB) or the short lived Muslim Party in Birmingham. Indeed, its platform included issues that could be readily identified with the far left such as opposing neo-liberalism, renationalising public services and promoting trade unionism a well as a commitment to ‘social justice’. Specific manifesto pledges included opposition to privatisation policies, higher taxes aimed

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7 Received 57,553 votes (0.2% share) in the 2001 general election and stood 98 candidates.
11 Reports suggest that locally Labour tried to compete against Respect by also claiming it was the ‘true party for Muslims’ (Middleton 2006).
12 Set up after the Rushdie affair in 1989, it never managed to retain its deposit in any of the elections it contested, see http://www.islamicparty.com Former executive member and home affairs spokesman for the IPB, Mohammad Naseem, actually stood as a candidate for Respect in the Perry Barr constituency (Birmingham) at the 2005 General Election challenging fellow Muslim and sitting Labour Party MP Khalid Mahmood. The success of Respect no doubt aided the demise of the IPB as many of its supporters lent their support to the new party.
13 Candidates contested the 2001 general election in four Birmingham constituencies averaging 1% of the vote. The only Islamic political party that is currently registered with the Electoral Commission is the Islam Zinda Baad Platform which stood one candidate in Rochdale in 2005 receiving 0.9% of the vote. Other examples of specifically Muslim political parties in Europe include the Parti des Musulmans de France (PMF) and the short-lived Moslim Democratische Partij (MDP) in Belgium, an offshoot of the Arab European League (AEL), see Jacobs (2005).
for businesses and high earners, the repeal of ‘anti-union’ legislation, safeguarding the National Health Service (NHS), defending civil liberties and raising the minimum wage (RESPECT 2005a).

The first elections the party contested were those for the European parliament and London Assembly on June 10th 2004. As both polls were based on proportional representation, confidence was high and Galloway predicted the election of up to five MEPs. In the European election, the party polled a quarter of a million votes but failed to elect an MEP. It also achieved 4.5% of the vote in the London Assembly contest, narrowly missing out on a seat. These results indicated that success would not be immediate. However, the breakdown of the vote showed that they had outperformed all other parties in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham gaining more than 20% of the vote, indicating that they could genuinely compete with the other parties in these areas. After only half a year of existence, Respect activists could be sufficiently proud of these results which were a huge improvement on previous performances by the far left. In local council elections that were held at the same time, the party failed to elect any candidates. However, one month later, Oliur Rahman, a trade unionist of Bangladeshi origin, became Respect’s first elected official when he won a council by-election in the St Dunstans and Stepney Green ward of Tower Hamlets with 31% of the vote. This isolated but significant victory gave the party and its activists increased impetus ahead of the forthcoming general election.

To elect an MP would be a huge task, although party activists were confident of causing an upset. Although the United Kingdom’s ‘first past the post’ (FPTP) plurality voting system makes it hard for smaller parties to win seats, it does favour those parties whose support is geographically concentrated. It is this factor that has helped regional parties fare reasonably well (Boucek 1998: 117). Given the geographic concentration of many Muslim communities, those involved in Respect knew that they could capitalise on the weakness of Labour in some of its former strongholds. The 2005 general election saw the party put forward 26 candidates in England and Wales. Much focus was given to East London where the party saw most potential for success. Three of the four sitting Labour MPs had voted in favour of the invasion of Iraq against the wishes of many of their constituents. The four Respect candidates in this area were George Galloway (Bethnal Green and Bow), SWP member and convenor of the SWC Lindsey German (West Ham), Abdul Khaliq Mian (East Ham) and Oliur Rahman (Poplar and Canning Town). The party won on average 6.9% of the vote nationwide in the constituencies it contested and performed poorly in most areas with 17 of their candidates losing their deposit. However in East London it was another story, Galloway won

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14 Parties must win at least 5% of the party list vote in order to win any seats in the London Assembly.
15 There was also a campaign to unseat Labour MPs in North West England by the Muslim Public Affairs Committee (MPAC-UK), see Russell et al (2008).
16 The exception was the late Tony Banks (West Ham) who was one of the Labour rebels who voted in favour of the backbench amendment that the case for war with Iraq was "unproven". He did not contest his seat in 2005.
his seat and German and Mian both came second to Labour with Rahman narrowly beaten into third place by the Conservatives. Salma Yaqoob also finished second in the Birmingham Small Heath and Sparkbrook constituency with a credible 27.5% of the vote. Galloway was elected by a margin of just 823 votes, overturning a Labour majority of over 10,000 and thus defeating the incumbent Oona King after a particularly hostile and acrimonious campaign. His victory was one of the big stories of an otherwise uneventful election and was the first time a party to the left of Labour had won a seat in parliament since 1951. Respect had achieved what the Green Party, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the British National Party (BNP) have so far failed to do – elect an MP. By the end of the year two Labour councillors and one Liberal Democrat had defected to Respect in Newham. The following year the party stood over 150 candidates at the local elections and went on to achieve notable success despite suffering from adverse publicity in the shape of Galloway’s participation on a reality TV show. In Birmingham, Salma Yaqoob was elected as a local councillor with the party receiving an impressive 55% of the vote in the Sparkbrook ward. The London borough of Tower Hamlets saw the party’s biggest success to date with 12 councillors being elected, subsequently making it the official opposition to Labour. In Newham, the 3 Respect councillors retained their seats although the party was disappointed to not have increased their presence in the council chamber after receiving 26% of the vote throughout the borough.

Yet the very success of the party became a cause of internal tension as only Muslim candidates were ever elected. Despite all the efforts put into electing Respect candidates by members of the SWP, they could never seem to elect one of their own. 2007 was a difficult year for the party as petty squabbles developed into deep divisions concerning the function and nature of the party. Although they managed to elect another three councillors in the local elections, in Tower Hamlets one of their councillors defected back to Labour and in October four councillors resigned the Respect whip. By November it found itself in a major crisis and eventually split into two rival

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17 In a now notorious post election interview, BBC journalist Jeremy Paxman repeatedly questioned Galloway whether he was proud of unseating one of the few black women in Parliament. ‘Paxman v Galloway’ BBC News [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/blog/4519553.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/blog/4519553.stm)

18 These parties also made significant gains in 2005 and minor parties as a whole received 10.5% of the vote (Webb 2005). On the fortunes of minor parties in the UK see Copus et al (2009).

19 He was a contestant on Channel 4’s Celebrity Big Brother and at one point was infamously made to impersonate a cat. His decision to participate drew much derision in the media but also serious political criticism for wasting his time on television instead of working for his constituents. ‘Where's our MP? Constituents say Galloway should get back to work’, The Times, 9 January 2006.

20 Abjol Miah who was later designated as the leader of Respect on Tower Hamlets council defeated the academic and leader of the council Michael Keith who had previously been his lecturer at university. Keith was again defeated by Respect candidate Harun Miah in a by-election in 2007. He is currently director of COMPAS at the University of Oxford [http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk](http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk)

21 The one exception to this is Michael Lavalette a lecturer in social policy at the University of Liverpool who became a local councillor in Preston in 2003 for the Socialist Alliance before becoming part of Respect. He was re-elected in 2007 as a Respect councillor, see appendix A.

22 Three of the rebels eventually defected to Labour in 2008 and the other joined the Conservatives, see appendix A.
factions. The first mainly consisted of those connected to the SWP and also included the rebel councillors. The second faction, initially entitled ‘Respect renewal’, was led by Galloway and Yaqoob and included prominent personalities such as Linda Smith (national chair). As Nominating Officer, Smith controlled the Respect name and so Galloway’s faction won the battle to be known as Respect and virtually all of the party’s elected representatives sided with Galloway. The party was still in disarray by the time of the London Assembly elections in May 2008 where the SWP faction presented itself as ‘The Left List’. Both parties performed poorly and failed to win a seat in the Assembly.

The party’s electoral performance is charted in table 1 and a list of current elected representatives is given in table 2. The number of people voting for Respect in the European elections in 2004 was drastically reduced by the time of the General Election in 2005. However, the vast majority of electors could of course not actually vote for the party in 2005 given that it only stood 26 candidates out of a total of 646 seats. The Iraq war was clearly a salient issue in 2004 and 2005 and Respect even characterised the European election as a ‘referendum on Blair’ (RESPECT 2004a). Despite a proportional electoral system that provides an increased chance of gaining representation, as the election of two Green Party MEPs has shown, Respect has not yet confirmed if it will stand candidates at the upcoming European elections. It seems instead to be focusing on the next general election, scheduled for 2010, and is targeting three specific seats where it hopes to seriously challenge Labour: Bethnal Green and Bow (Abjol Miah) and Limehouse and Poplar (George Galloway) in East London and Birmingham Hall Green (Salma Yaqoob). Failure to win any of these seats would be a major setback, and could potentially spell the end of the party. However, if they were to win two or even all three of these seats and perform well in other areas it could potentially set the party on its way to consolidation in British politics. As table 2 illustrates, the party has a number of representatives in the councils of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Birmingham. However, this is often concentrated in certain wards such as Sparkbrook in Birmingham and Green Street West in Newham, both home to large Muslim populations. This indicates that they are largely dependent on these voters and need them to turn out in force in order to overturn Labour. The dynamics of what I refer to as ‘ethnic politics’ are explained below.

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23 Interestingly, the original party website [http://www.respectcoalition.org](http://www.respectcoalition.org) had always been controlled by those affiliated with the SWP and so this now links to their new party - The Left Alternative.

24 It may yet join the new No2EU electoral alliance, [http://www.no2eu.com](http://www.no2eu.com)
### Table 1. Respect results at major elections 2004-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Votes polled</th>
<th>Share of the vote</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004 European</td>
<td>252,216</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 London Assembly</td>
<td>82,301 / 87,533 *</td>
<td>4.6% / 4.57%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 London Mayoral</td>
<td>61,731 / 63,294 **</td>
<td>3.2% / 3.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 General Election</td>
<td>68,094</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 London Assembly ***</td>
<td>26,760 / 59,721 *</td>
<td>1.1% / 2.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* First figure refers to the constituency (First Past the Post) result, the second to the top-up (Additional Member System) result.
** First figure refers to 1st preference votes, the second to 2nd preference votes.
*** No Respect candidate for 2008 Mayoral election, the party endorsed Ken Livingstone. The Left List polled 16,796/35,057.

### Table 2. Respect elected representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Constituency/Ward</th>
<th>Representative body</th>
<th>Year elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Galloway</td>
<td>Bethnall Green &amp; Bow</td>
<td>UK Parliament</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abjol Miah</td>
<td>Shadwell</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Mamun Rashid</td>
<td>Shadwell</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harun Miah</td>
<td>Shadwell</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fozol Miah</td>
<td>Spitalfields &amp; Banglatown</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Abdul Munim</td>
<td>Bromley by Bow</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulal Uddin</td>
<td>Limehouse</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Karim Sheikh</td>
<td>Green Street West</td>
<td>Newham council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanif Abdulmuhit</td>
<td>Green Street West</td>
<td>Newham council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asif Karim</td>
<td>Green Street West</td>
<td>Newham council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salma Yaqoob</td>
<td>Sparkbrook</td>
<td>Birmingham city council</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed Ishtiaq</td>
<td>Sparkbrook</td>
<td>Birmingham city council</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahim Khan</td>
<td>Sparkbrook</td>
<td>Birmingham city council</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Holmes</td>
<td>Shirebrook North West</td>
<td>Bolsover district council</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* By-election victory for a seat originally won by Respect in 2006.

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25 Table correct as of March 2009. It does not include those who either defected to Respect but subsequently failed to get re-elected or those who were elected as Respect candidates but have since defected to other parties, see appendix A.
Ethnic politics in Britain

The link between the Labour party and the communities of post-colonial immigrants and their descendants has traditionally been very solid and constituencies with high numbers of ethnic minorities have always been bastions of Labour party support. In his groundbreaking study *Race and Party Competition in Britain*, Anthony Messina (1989: 151) summed up the situation thus: ‘Asian and Afro-Caribbean electors constitute a solid voting bloc; and these constituencies are extremely loyal to Labour. By virtually all indices, Labour is the party of, if not unambiguously for, non-whites.’ Indeed, for many years support for the Labour party from these sections of the electorate was seen as natural because most immigrants (and their descendants) formed part of the working class and Labour had also supported ethnic minorities by promoting race relations and anti-discrimination legislation. Labour had also taken a more active role in using pillars of such communities to stand as candidates in elections, although this practice has by now been adopted by all the main parties. In comparison with many other countries in Western Europe, actively selecting ethnic minority candidates may appear particularly progressive. However, it has often involved many perverse aspects. Minority communities, in particular South East Asian communities, have been commonly used as vote banks in a pattern of co-optation of ‘community leaders’. In his study into the politics of ethnic minorities and the Labour party in Birmingham, Garbaye (2005) identifies three styles of co-optation: patronage, radical activist and ethnic community, which tend to overlap and operate simultaneously in areas with high numbers of ethnic minorities.\(^{26}\) This has led to undemocratic practices as electors from these communities are encouraged to vote according to family or kinship relations. In Pakistani communities for example, the *biraderi* (extended clan) has been used to secure votes from whole swathes of a community.\(^{27}\) Glynn (2008: 71) explains how this had worked within the Bangladeshi community in East London:

A close community with strong patriarchal structures allows for the most efficient use of those non-party ties and networks that are exploited by politicians of all backgrounds. The importance of patronage relations was strengthened by communication difficulties that left those who could translate English and Bengali (and understood political procedure) in a powerful position. Existing patterns of patronage that are found in many ethnic minority communities will inevitably be exploited in politics, and possible reinforced.

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\(^{26}\) The patronage model involves candidates receiving favours for their community in return for securing election victory for Labour. Radical activists were those more active within the party and aligned to its left wing who supported their candidacy. In the ethnic community model, councillors of Asian background build political careers on resources drawn from their communities and merely use the Labour party as a structure. For more information on ethnic minorities in British politics see Saggar (1998), Anwar (2001) and Crowley (2001).

\(^{27}\) Respect’s Salma Yaqoob (2008) claims that ‘*Biraderi* networks can exert undue influence…Last year in Birmingham Sparkbrook we came under considerable pressure when we selected a candidate whose family were originally from the same village in Pakistan as the sitting Lib Dem councillor. It was alleged we were splitting the *biraderi* vote.’
The Labour party in particular has certainly exploited this situation for many years and has knowingly allowed this kind of politics to flourish within Muslim communities (Lewis 2007: 52). 74% of the Muslim councillors interviewed by Kingsley Purdham (2001: 151) admitted that in their experience individuals had used such loyalties to appeal to Muslims at the local level. This kind of politics occasionally leads to outright corruption, such as the Birmingham postal vote scandal in 2004. Respect was often criticised in the media as being ‘communalist’ i.e. only campaigning for one particular ethnic group, with some even comparing it to the far right BNP. Such statements appear misplaced given that the party has put forward candidates from all ethnic backgrounds and the party’s leaders have often been keen to point out that their candidates are the most diverse, not only regarding ethnicity but also in terms of age and gender. There can be no doubt that a large part of Respect’s strategy lies in courting Muslim voters, however there is nothing novel in such a tactic. This is merely the nature of ethnic politics in Britain which in turn is a result of the plurality voting system which makes ethnic minority communities concentrated in particular geographic areas into kingmakers at election time. All the main parties engage in tactics designed to court such communities. In their study of Respect, Clark et al (2008: 518) note that ‘a sizeable proportion of the party’s activists, candidates and representatives appear to come from Asian or Muslim backgrounds’. Yet again though, this is far from being unique to Respect. Purdham (1996: 133) noted more than ten years ago that ‘many local Labour parties in areas with a high Muslim population are now under Muslim control.’ As mentioned previously, it has become *de rigueur* for all parties to put forward ethnic minority candidates in areas with large numbers of ethnic minority voters. Councillors representing wards with a high ethnic minority population are inevitably members of ethnic minorities themselves, irrespective of their party affiliation.

Although all parties try to appeal to a Muslim electorate, both through their policies and candidates, it is inaccurate to talk of a ‘Muslim vote’ in the sense of one homogeneous voting bloc. Muslim voters are usually split according to several different cleavages related to family/clan/village ties, mosque/theological affiliation as well as the kind of socio-economic

28 Three Asian Labour councillors were ousted and banned from standing for office by an election commissioner who found them guilty of corrupt and illegal practices, see Stewart (2006). Respect has always opposed postal voting as it sees it as a means for Labour to siphon off some of its potential support through vote rigging practices. ‘Respect action over postal vote’, BBC News [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4455635.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4455635.stm) A petition was lodged on 31 May 2005 by Respect challenging the general election result in the constituency of Birmingham Sparkbrook and Small Heath because of suspicion of electoral fraud. ‘Poll challenged over postal votes’, The Times, 1 June 2005. For extensive details of cases of electoral fraud and postal voting in the UK see White and Moulton (2009).

29 A comparison also made by Clark et al (2008).

30 At the 2005 general election, 9 out of 26 candidates (34.6%) were female and almost half of their candidates (33 out of 68) were female for the 2004 European elections.

31 This has been the case at the local level for quite some time and is now also becoming more common for parliamentary elections. In the past parties (in particular Labour) encouraged ethnic minorities to serve at the local level in order to control a particular council but made it more difficult for them to stand for parliamentary seats. Indeed many prominent government ministers have been elected in such constituencies which are seen as ‘safe seats’. 
cleavages that separate all voters.\textsuperscript{32} In Tower Hamlets, there is also an Islamist/Secularist cleavage amongst the Bangladeshi community which relates to the Liberation war of 1971.\textsuperscript{33} It is because of this complexity that the role of civil society becomes even more vital to secure electoral support in such areas. The example of Tower Hamlets illustrates the need for parties to do much more than gain a hypothetical Muslim vote. They need to deal with both local political concerns as well as taking into account diaspora politics imported from Bangladesh. The area is thus characterised by a ‘complicated interweaving of political struggles between (1) the major parties (Awami League, Bangladesh National Party and Jatiya Party) and Islamist pressure groups in Bangladesh and (2) British political parties’ (Begum and Eade 2005: 184). Many of the elected politicians from the Bangladeshi community have links with parties in the sub-continent and it is through such links that they have been able to build up their political capital in the area. When Galloway ran for MP, he was taken by Respect members on a tour of the region of Sylhet in order to garner support for his candidacy.\textsuperscript{34} A Respect councillor explains this decision:

\begin{quote}
We said to George ‘go and visit those poor areas, family members will appreciate that, they will then phone up and canvass for you from Bangladesh’ and that’s what happened. People phoned up telling their family members to ‘give this gentleman a chance’. Also, we needed to divide the voters as soon as possible because we also have the Bangladeshi politics to deal with too. This meant trying to make friends with all the political parties over there, giving them hope and aspiration, providing neutrality as an MP and to serve the interests of Bangladesh. This helped to neutralise the [Bangladeshi] political parties who would normally have affiliated themselves with the Labour party.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Such divide and conquer tactics demonstrate an astute political awareness of the likely voting patterns amongst the local community. It also illustrates how in ‘ethnic politics’ the local cannot be separated from the global. Indeed international issues such as government foreign policy decisions are also used as key themes even for local elections. Opposition to Britain’s military presence in Iraq has been central to this, but Respect candidates also attempt to mobilise the electorate around other issues close to the heart of many Muslims such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Respect candidates combine this with a strong focus on local issues. It sees itself as a grassroots political party, and one councillor stressed that he wanted to make a point of winning by operating at the grass roots level.\textsuperscript{36} It is through their links with local sections of civil society that they are able to gain support for their candidates despite the stiff electoral competition from more established parties.

\textsuperscript{32} For example many Muslim businessmen will naturally vote Conservative. The party has responded to this new electorate by setting up a Muslim Forum \url{http://www.conservativemuslimforum.com}

\textsuperscript{33} For more details see Glynn (2002) and Eade & Garbin (2006).

\textsuperscript{34} This is where most Bangladeshis in East London trace their origins and links between the villages of this area and the first generation migrants are still important.

\textsuperscript{35} Interview with Respect councillor for Tower Hamlets Council.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.}
When studying political parties and their relationship with civil society, Respect provides an interesting case study as it evolved directly from a social movement. From the outset it was, by its very nature, already embedded in a host of civil society organisations and networks connected to the anti-war movement but also to the wider movement against neo-liberal globalisation (Peace 2008). Such a trajectory represents a somewhat anomalous path for modern day parties but is of course not novel in the history of Western European democracies where mass parties often started as ‘a movement from society towards the state’ (Biezen 2005: 169). The British Labour party grew directly out of the trade union movement and the ‘contentious alliance’ (Minkin 1991) between Labour and the unions was central to the party’s development in the twentieth century. Despite a process of distancing which started in the 1990s (Alderman and Carter 1994, McIlroy 1998) this relationship remains important today as it still provides the lion’s share of Labour’s funding. The period 2001-2004 saw the relationship between many unions and the Labour party being strained to breaking point under the influence of the so-called ‘awkward squad’. In February 2004 the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) was disaffiliated from Labour after some of its Scottish branches decided to affiliate with the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP). In June that same year, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) voted to break its historic 86-year link with Labour. The declining importance of the unions for Labour and the fragility of their ties with the party was something that Respect initially hoped to capitalise on and become the new recipient of union support. This was initially the primary element of civil society that was targeted in order to build and develop the party.

A number of high profile unions had affiliated themselves with the anti-war movement and the chair of the SWC was in fact Andrew Murray, director of campaigns and communications of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G). Linda Smith of the FBU was a founding member of Respect and its first elected representative Oliur Rahman was a branch secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS). Other local leaders from unions such as UNISON, the RMT and Amicus also stood as candidates for Respect. The party attempted to couch itself as a union friendly party that represented the antithesis of Labour and the supposed betrayals of its

37 Often referred to as the ‘anti-globalisation movement’ or by its supporters as the ‘Global Justice Movement’.
38 The name given to an informal grouping of leading trade unionists who were extremely critical of Labour, see Murray (2003).
39 The Trades Union Congress (TUC), the national federation of British trade unions voted to oppose the invasion of Iraq which was ‘the first time organised labour had come out united against British involvement in a war since Suez in 1956 (Murray & German 2005: 172).
40 In 2007 the T&G and Amicus merged to form a new union – Unite. Respect activist Jerry Hicks recently finished second in the leadership election for the Amicus section.
working class electorate and union heritage. The ‘repeal of Tory anti-union laws’ was listed as a key point in the party’s founding declaration and was repeated as a pledge in subsequent electoral manifestoes (RESPECT 2005). In the immediate aftermath of the party’s foundation, Galloway attended a ‘Convention of the Trade Union Left’ in order drum up support for the new party amongst trade unionists unhappy with Labour. Throughout 2004 Respect managed to slowly gain the support of certain local branches of the RMT and FBU and even gained some modest financial support for its election campaigns. Mark Serwotka, General Secretary of the PCS also lent his personal support to Respect which in return backed their members when they went on strike (RESPECT 2004d). However, beyond these rather tenuous links the party was unable to forge the kind of meaningful alliances it had hoped for within the trade union movement. This is perhaps not surprising given the small size and meagre influence of the party and the fact that in many areas of the country it did not even exist on the ground. Respect’s failure to elect a single MEP or London Assembly member further reduced its potential appeal to trade unions and the Warwick agreement in July 2004 came as a huge blow to Respect’s ambitions of building a left-wing alternative to Labour with union backing. Although Respect joined and supported unions at the local level during various disputes, a meaningful partnership with the national organisations remained an unrealistic goal. It would therefore be left to other local civil society organisations to help Respect gain representation.

The party was at a massive disadvantage regarding both human and financial resources in relation to the established parties, a fact it readily admitted in its campaign literature: ‘We do not have the money or the media coverage the big parties have. Our strength is you. We need you to contact us and take leaflets to your local mosque, study circle, community organisation etc’ (RESPECT 2004c). The mosques and local community groups (which may not necessarily have a religious focus) are the two most important aspects of civil society that Respect has relied on in order to achieve electoral success. Such a strategy is commonplace in ethnic politics and is also employed by competing politicians, many of whom are also from the ethnic minority community in question. In Tower Hamlets for example, former Bangladeshi youth activists occupy a pivotal role in the community organisation sector and many have entered the local authority through either Labour or the Liberal Democrats and subsequently succeed in securing funding for cultural and community projects (Eade & Garbin 2006: 185). Community organisations are dependent on

41 A reference to legislation brought in by Margaret Thatcher to curb the power of Trade Unions in Britain. The TUC is currently sponsoring a proposed piece of legislation entitled the Trade Union Freedom Bill which would reverse some of the existing limits on taking industrial action, see http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/TUFB.pdf
42 This agreement helped to patch up many of the differences between Labour and the trade unions and ensured their support for the party in the 2005 general election. Despite recurrent tensions, most of the major British trade unions remain affiliated to Labour within the Trade Union & Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO), see http://www.labour.org.uk/tulo
council funding which encourages a patron-client relationship with these local councillors and the party they represent. Respect candidates were thus forced to innovate and bypass some of the traditional structures, or in some cases create new rival organisations. The third aspect of civil society that needs to be taken into account involves social movements and local political campaigns that prospective Respect candidates and their supporters align themselves with. The anti-war movement and the SWC was the most obvious example of this but other campaigns around council housing and opposition to privatisation of public services and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) as well as protests and demonstrations organised by trade unions were also important. All three of these aspects of civil society will be explored in order to illustrate their importance for Respect’s electoral support in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham.

These two local authorities have the highest percentage of Muslims in the population in the UK (Lewis 2007: 21). It is thus unsurprising that Mosques and other faith-based organisations are some of the most visible and influential civil society players in these areas. These organisations have become even more important in recent years as both national and local governments seek to engage faith groups in order to facilitate regeneration, provide consultation on policy making and service delivery as well as generally promoting ‘community cohesion’ through interfaith activity (McLoughlin 2005). The leading mosques in East London are involved in partnerships with local authorities to carry out social welfare functions and faith led groups are heavily involved in preventive work on drugs, youth homelessness, teenage pregnancy and anti-social behaviour (Begum & Eade 2005). The East London Mosque (ELM) has developed a particularly dominant role in this respect and works in close collaboration with the health authorities, job centre and local schools (Glynn 2008). It is seen as a key power broker in the local political arena, so much so that every local politician is obliged to speak with its leadership and publicly visit the mosque if they want to stand a chance of being elected.43 ELM ‘has been highly successful at building alliances with local government officials, and its recent expansion that resulted in the creation of the London Muslim Centre (used for prayers, recreational facilities and housing) has strengthened its position at a time when funding for secular groups significantly declined’ (Eade & Garbin 2006: 188). It has also become an important actor through its membership of the London Citizens network which unites over one hundred different civil society organisations across the city campaigning on various social issues.44

Mosques do not usually openly support one particular candidate at election time as this could be divisive and also counter-productive. Some are particularly apolitical and avoid

43 Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets.
44 Formerly known as the East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) before developing into a London-wide initiative, see http://www.londoncitizens.org.uk and Jamoul and Wills (2008).
involvement in party politics altogether. The description that Schmitt-Beck and Farrell (2008: 14) provide about organised interests is certainly apt concerning the more political mosques such as ELM:

Often, they refrain from clearly taking sides at elections, for fear of alienating members who no longer automatically come from the same political background, but also in order to prevent their relations to government officials from being entirely dependent on the fickle electoral fate of just one particular party. On the contrary, they generally try to stay on friendly terms with several parties at the same time. Sometimes they avoid clear party political statements and refer to more subtle techniques of signalling to their members what the best electoral choices are.

Likewise, faith-based organisations are often registered charities and this too means that they are legally not permitted to endorse political parties or display partisan affiliation. However, it is widely acknowledged that leaders within both mosques and related organisations hold the ability to sway the opinions of many voters and so local politicians often enter into negotiations with them. As one councillor simply put it, ‘they need our help and we need their votes’. To this end, Respect candidates and supporters would often leaflet outside mosques after Friday prayers and on certain occasions were allowed to address those inside. In his campaign for election in Bethnal Green and Bow in 2005, Galloway made a point of visiting all the mosques in the area and spoke to their trustees. ‘Their support was crucial for George’s campaign; all the mosques helped George because he did the right thing. He went and visited them all and talked to the leadership. They gave him advice and he took it.’ Indeed, although it is difficult to gauge just how vital this support was, it is widely assumed that institutions such as ELM and faith based organisations close to it such as Islamic Forum Europe (IFE) were instrumental in his election victory. So much so that Bangladeshi politicians from the secularist Awami League were urging their supporters in London to vote Labour in spite of the Iraq issue (Hussain 2007). IFE and its youth wing the Young Muslim Organisation (YMO) are influenced by, although not organically tied to, the Jamaat-e-Islami political party. Respect came in for criticism by using these organisations, particularly internally from the SWP. A Respect councillor defended this strategy:

We have to speak to everyone. You can’t say ‘OK we’re going to support Awami League and exclude Jamaat-e-Islami.’ Jamaat is very powerful in Bangladesh, all the business sector in Sylhet is controlled by Jamaat and there is big support for Jamaat in Tower Hamlets.

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45 Interestingly, 85% of the Muslim councillors that Pudham (2000) interviewed believed that mosques should not be involved in politics.
46 Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets.
47 The Awami League led the struggle for independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan. They are deeply opposed to the ELM as some of the trustees are accused of war crimes from 1971.
48 An Islamist party founded in 1941 by Abdul Ala Maududi and which competes in elections in both Pakistan and Bangladesh.
49 Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets.
At the same time in Newham, the link with local mosques was even more direct. Respect’s candidate for the seat of East Ham in 2005 was Abdul Khaliq Mian, a local community organiser and part of the Newham Muslim Alliance (NMA), a coalition of leaders from 25 local mosques. He organised several hustings, debates and fundraising events at venues such as Muslim faith schools and his selection was endorsed by other mosque leaders: ‘Before I stood we called a meeting of the elders from the mosques and explained the process. They endorsed me.’ The Respect candidate for mayor of Newham in 2006 was Abdurahman Jafar a human rights barrister, and vice-chair of the legal affairs committee of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Both candidates were able to mobilise large numbers of voters in Newham, despite coming second in both contests. These links have also been important in Birmingham, the other area where Respect has made an electoral breakthrough. Salma Yaqoob is a spokeswoman for Birmingham central mosque and also secured the backing of several Muslim scholars for her campaigns (RESPECT 2005b).

Community groups, as we have seen, are useful for local politicians who often maintain direct links with them and provide their revenue through council funding. In his study of Muslim councillors, Purdham (2000: 49) noted that they had ‘voluntary experience in various anti-racist agencies, community action groups and advice centres’. Respect candidates were no different and also had connections with different grass roots community groups and drew on these connections for their campaign. Community workers were also encouraged to come on board and be part of this. Thus a lot of time was devoted to these groups because:

In the Bangladeshi community there are so many associations linked to their particular village or geographical area and the whole cultural psyche is linked to that. They do a lot of projects and fundraising…if you understand that well you can utilise it to your advantage.

Once elected into office in 2006, a number of Respect councillors in Tower Hamlets have appropriated the tactic of setting up local community groups in the wards they represent. In the Limehouse ward, six such groups have already been set up by Councillor Dulal Uddin. Respect put forward a number of female candidates and they worked particularly hard to gain a female vote for the party, something that is often neglected by mainstream parties that tend to focus on male community leaders. Former Respect Councillor Lutfa Begum attributes her election victory and that of her daughter Rania Khan to the support of women’s groups that met in the mosque. This kind of canvassing is not limited to the Bangladeshi community. Pensioner’s groups were also approached, as they contained many residents who were upset by the shift away from traditional

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50 Quoted in Taylor (2005).
51 Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets.
52 Ibid.
53 Purdham (2000: 48) also discovered that female Muslim councillors are contacted more often by female members of their electoral ward.
working class values by Labour. In its manifesto, Respect targeted these voters by calling for a rise in the basic state pension and free long term care for all pensioners (RESPECT 2005). Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) were also another way for Respect candidates to gain support in the local community, particularly through the campaign to stop councils selling off their remaining housing stock.

In Tower Hamlets, as in many other areas, many council houses have been sold off to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) because the local authority lacks the money to repair and maintain them. The borough has the second highest proportion of RSL owned housing in London at 18.4% but many residents and TRAs oppose the policy off transferring even more council stock. Committed to opposing privatisation, Respect became part of the national campaign group Defend Council Housing (DCH) and was very active in the local branch ‘Tower Hamlets Against Transfer’. When the council implemented a scheme called Housing Choice that allowed council tenants to vote whether they wanted to move control of their properties from the council to an RSL, Respect campaigned heavily for a no vote in these ballots. Through grass roots political action including local meetings for tenants and in partnership with others involved in DCH, they attempted to inform residents of the potentially negative aspects of voting for a stock transfer. They even had to counter the RSLs who engaged in the well known tactic of consulting with community leaders in order to buy votes:

In our defend council housing campaign, we were on the ocean estate, the RSLs encouraged the local mosques and community groups by offering financial incentives in the hope that residents would vote for a stock transfer. They go to mosque committees and say ‘OK you want to develop your mosque? We can reach an agreement on that’ and so people are enticed to vote for something that will actually harm the whole community in the long run. Although the community group might not see the bigger picture and opt for short term gain we as a party totally disagree with that. I was able to bypass that, and created another power bloc, so even though that particular mosque was influential, I took the power base out and shifted the power somewhere else. Therefore the influence was coming from another direction when it came to the ballot box.

Thus the recourse to civil society is also made by private interests which Respect activists are forced to undercut. Respect campaigned hard on local estates and made the housing issue central in their local election campaign in 2006, calling for an end to the privatisation of council housing

54 As part of the private sector, RSLs (independent, not for profit private sector organisations) can raise private finance for new schemes and for investing in stock transferred from local authorities outside the constraints of Public Expenditure control and the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement. For more information see Mullins & Pawson (2009).
55 http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk DCH has the support of a number of MPs, unions and local councillors and lobbies for local authorities to be allowed to implement the ‘fourth option’ – invest in council housing (the other three being stock transfer, PFI or ALMOs).
56 Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets. It is not entirely clear how this councillor ‘shifted the power’ inside the mosque and refused to divulge his ‘secret tactics’ when questioned further on this matter.
They helped to secure a vote against stock transfers from a majority of housing estates and forced the local authority to adopt the strategy of setting up an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMOs) – Tower Hamlets Homes. By this time 12 Respect members had been elected as local councillors and were able to fight the measures from within the council chamber. Such was the unpopularity of the ALMO initiative, and the way it was pushed through by the Labour Executive, that Respect councillors were even supported by their Liberal Democrat and Conservative party counterparts. This demonstrated that Respect was willing and able to translate its grassroots political activity into the arena of institutional politics.

Local campaigning against the war on Iraq probably contributed the most to Respect’s successes. Tower Hamlets Stop the War (THSW), was one of the largest local branches of the SWC. Many of those who were candidates for Respect were the leaders of this branch and its success and implantation into the local community also helps to explain why Tower Hamlets became the heartland of the party. Once Respect started campaigning as a political party it could rely on the pre-existing networks that had been built up with various sections of civil society as a solid base for support. It also meant that the party had at its disposal a virtual army of volunteers ready to help the campaign, including many young people who had become politicised through the anti-war movement.

We had a lot of volunteers. On the Saturday before the election 400 went out. That was exceptional, but there were regular teams from other parts of London. We had local Respect supporters and attracted more during the campaign, including lots of Bengali kids. They provided lots of canvassers. On the day of the election there were banners hanging from windows and across streets.

Many youth groups had been involved in THSW and Abjol Miah who became leader of Respect in the council had worked for Tower Hamlets council as a youth leader. This gave him a significant amount of political capital amongst the local youths and those voting for the first time. Tower Hamlets has a young population and the youth vote itself was extremely important for Respect. In terms of Bangladeshi origin youths, Respect’s task was facilitated because those born and brought up in Britain are more likely to reject the traditional pattern of the father dictating the political direction of the family and delivering bloc votes to a particular candidate. Labour was still relying

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57 This issue appears to have struck a chord with voters as David Edgar, the Labour lead member for housing and the architect of Tower Hamlets council’s strategy to sell off its housing stock, was defeated by a Respect candidate (Rania Khan).
58 An ALMO is a not for profit organisation run by an unpaid board of directors, which includes councillors and tenant representatives. Unlike stock transfer to a housing association, under an ALMO, ownership of the blocks and open space stays with the council, however critics accuse them of representing privatisation by the back door. ‘Tenants fight ALMO’, BBC London News, http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2006/12/03/almo_feature.shtml See also http://www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk
59 See the criticism of the ALMO solution by former Respect Councillor Ahmed Hussain ‘Stop the bullying in Tower Hamlets’ http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk/dch/resources/pamphlet2006/AhmedHussain.doc
on this *modus operandi* which younger voters often oppose and perceive as archaic.\textsuperscript{61} The enthusiasm shown by young people during the 2005 election campaign also led to a youth wing being set up in the borough – Youth Respect.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have tried to highlight the nature of the relationship between civil society and the Respect party and how it has helped to elect Respect candidates to public office in East London. As a mostly descriptive account of these processes it has not attempted to engage with any broader theoretical or conceptual framework regarding the relationship between parties and civil society. It merely advances two claims: that relations with civil society are an asset to smaller parties competing in unfavourable electoral systems and that larger parties also harness these structures when they are competing in ‘ethnic politics’ where civil society ties are strong. These claims naturally need to be tested further, both across time and space. However, attempting to measure these relationships may prove difficult as they often remain temporary and unofficial. It is also difficult to accurately evaluate the true relevance of such relationships. For example, even if a particular faith-based organisation were to lend its support to a particular party, how would one go about measuring the impact on the electorate and how it subsequently voted? The information presented in this paper also poses a normative question. Is civil society involvement with political parties necessarily good for democracy? Although a stronger link between civil society and political parties may promote more civic engagement in the political process, might it not also encourage a more lobbyist style of politics? Is the mixing of religion and politics healthy? Could we see the development of a new religious cleavage if faith-based organisations become more involved in politics? Such a statement may appear far-fetched although it has begun to emerge at a local level. In Newham for example, the Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA) has three councillors and gains its support in a similar way as Respect through faith-based organisations and churches.\textsuperscript{62}

The anti-war movement in Britain gave the impetus for the creation of a new party and also provided it with a base within civil society from which it could subsequently draw support. The invasion of Iraq was a central issue on which the party could campaign given that many voters, particularly Muslims, were angered by this foreign policy decision. However, now that the anti-war movement is slowly winding down, the real test for the party will be to see if it can do more than merely mobilise an anti-war protest vote. As Poguntke (2002: 49) has remarked, ‘while good links

\textsuperscript{61} Interview with Respect councillor in Tower Hamlets.

\textsuperscript{62} The CPA received 70, 294 votes for the London Assembly elections in 2008, beating Respect and UKIP. [http://www.cpaparty.org.uk](http://www.cpaparty.org.uk)
with new social movements may be a significant (though highly contingent) electoral asset during phases of high protest mobilization, it is of little value in quiet times. Respect leaders are more than aware of this and the party is now focusing on the issue of Palestine by calling for Boycotts of Israeli products and becoming a major part of the Viva Palestina campaign. Compared to other minor parties, it still has a long way to go before it becomes an effective national force. At the last nationwide election for local councils in 2007, the party fielded just 45 candidates for over 10,000 seats. By contrast the Green party had over 1,400 candidates and the BNP nearly 750, doubling the amount it had put forward just one year previously. Rather than attempting to appeal to a wider electorate, Respect seems intent on building its profile in those areas where it has become established and has a chance of getting elected. If this aim is to be achieved, the link with civil society will no doubt remain crucial. However, over-reliance on these organisations may limit any further development of the party, especially outside its current strongholds.

References


http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/RESPECT_uk_manifesto.pdf


http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1406
**Appendix A – Former Respect Councillors**

**Tower Hamlets:**

Shahed Ali (Whitechapel) - Defected from Labour to Respect in 2005 and then back to Labour in 2007.
Rania Khan (Bromley by Bow) - Elected in 2006 and defected to Labour in 2008.

**Preston:**

Michael Lavalette – councillor since 2003. Left Respect in 2008 as a result of the split with the SWP and is now an ‘Independent Socialist’.

**Newham:**

Sarah Ruiz (East Ham) - Labour councillor who defected to Respect in 2005 but subsequently lost her seat in 2006.

**Birmingham:**


**Charnwood:**

Wayne Muldoon (Lemyngton) – Defected from Labour in 2007 but subsequently lost his seat in elections later that year.