The Academic Committee this year considered six cases and proposed statements to the Executive Committee of ISA on two of them. The Executive Committee approved those two. The most controversial and involved was the statement on the US Travel ban which was issued prior to the 2017 meeting in Baltimore (though after the writing of the previous year’s report, so was not reflected in that report). Because of the discussion it generated, this statement will be discussed separately in the report.

This report is divided into three sections: 1) Reflections on procedures; 2) Cases considered; 3) US Travel Ban; 4) Panels proposed for 2018 Convention.

1. REFLECTIONS ON PROCEDURES

As noted in last year’s report, the AFC changed its procedures in order to streamline the process. With the help of the ISA IT team, the new system is designed to encourage ISA members to submit reports via its website which is then directed to the AFC Chair’s email. This has generated very few requests for cases to be considered; in fact, contact has been more often through the Chair’s direct email, Committee member suggestions, or the ISA Executive Director’s suggestions. There perhaps needs to be a more active campaign by the ISA or the Committee to make known to the ISA membership the existence of the website and the procedures for proposing cases to be investigated.

A member of the LRPC reached out to the AFC to suggest four procedural changes for ISA to consider. The AFC Chair was consulted on these, and he then forwarded these proposal to the Committee as a whole, along with the ISA Executive Director and ISA President. There was discussion among the Committee members about this, but as these would be decisions for the ISA Governing Council to make, no decision was made on these. The Executive Committee did not choose to pursue these proposals, as they raised concerns about the AFC and ISA more generally being accused of partisanship. In the view of the Committee Chair, some of these proposals may have been worth pursuing, but he recognizes that some of the concerns expressed by the ISA Exec are legitimate and need to be considered.

2. CASES CONSIDERED

The following cases were considered by the committee:

1. Travel ban in US. Statement issued by ISA Exec in January 2018 (prior to Baltimore meeting, but issued after the report from 2017 drafted).
2. (not considered enough evidence to send to Exec)
3. General situation in Turkey. A number of requests, none of which were acted upon, either by the AFC or ISA Exec. The AFC proposed three statements, which were all issued by ISA Exec. following the coup attempt in
July 2016 which led to massive levels of persecution among Turkish academics, largely around the issue of Kurdish autonomy.

4. Threats to Central European University (Hungary). Statement issued by ISA Exec in April 2017

5. XXXXXXXXXX AFC discussed via email, but no proposal sent to ISA Exec. Issue did not seem to be one of academic freedom

6. XXXXXXXXXX AFC considered this case, which comes from the Danish Government seeking to imposed limits on what non-native academics can do publicly. After an extended email exchange, the AFC did not consider this case one of academic freedom, though there is certainly something worrying here. Nothing was sent to the ISA Exec for consideration.

3. US TRAVEL BAN

As noted above, the ISA issued statements on the Trump Administration’s executive order concerning a travel ban. After understanding the implications of the travel ban, the ISA realized this would prevent some scholars from attending ISA. The ISA issued an interim statement in mid-January 2017 indicating it would refund scholars not able to attend the convention as a result of this, and reiterated its position that it must remain non-partisan.

After consultation between the ISA Exec and the AFC, the AFC drafted a second more focused statement on the threat to academic freedom that the travel ban had created. This statement, with some additional edits, was approved and issued by the Executive Committee. This resulted in part from initiatives from the committee. After a great deal of deliberation, the AFC sent a statement to the ISA Exec. It changed this only very slightly, and then issued a statement on 31 January 2017 based on the threat to academic freedom. It also created a process by which ISA members could appeal their non-attendance at ISA and be refunded.

The chair of the AFC responded to a number or queries on the travel ban and the refund. These were handled very efficiently by the ISA staff. The AFC chair also responded to concerns about the travel ban, both some that supported it and some which opposed it and wanted more action from ISA.

4. PANELS PROPOSED

For the 2018 convention, the ISA gave the AFC three panel slots. The following panels have been proposed for the 2018 convention:

1. TD 39 Panel: Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech
2. FA34 Roundtable: “Kill All Normies?” Academic Freedom, the Alt-Right, and the Decadent Left
3. SA61: Roundtable: Academic Freedom: Activism, Politics and the Classroom

Thanks to committee members Galia Golan and Nick Kiersey for proposing and chairing the two roundtables.