has mounted a campaign to have his name of Republika Srpska declared illegal. On April 18th the parliament of Republika Srpska voted to establish a new reserve police force, a move which risks sparking an arms race with the federation.

When they want to, Bosnian politicians can put aside their disagreements and work together effectively. And though Bosnia’s demeure has been wide and long predicted, it still functions. Yet the omens are not good. Although its economy grew by 3.1% last year, more and more people are leaving. “For 25 years I lived in hope,” says Ilijia, a Croatian driver in Sarajevo. “Now I hate myself because of that.” Having secured the necessary permits, he is emigrating to Germany. Before the war about 450,000 people lived in Bosnia. There are perhaps 3.5m now, and the country has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. If you could measure beauty and bitterness, Bosnia would also be a world beater. 

Assimilation

Pholand

Vietnamese migrants have integrated well in an anti-immigrant bit of Europe

“T he business centre”, a sprawling warehouse in Wolka Kosowska outside Warsaw, has a distinctly East Asian feel. The air is filled with chitter music and haggling in Vietnamese. Impromptu bouts of ten len, a card game, are set up on cardboard boxes. A sign warns that “burning incense is prohibited”; another that tea dregs are not to clog the wash basin.

Poland and the Czech Republic, both of which vehemently oppose European efforts to redistribute Syrian refugees, are home to large Asian communities. The first Vietnamese arrived in the 1980s as part of a student exchange between their country and the socialist republics of Eastern Europe. Many settled and brought over relatives. Today there are an estimated 40,000-50,000 of them in Poland, and 60,000-80,000 in the Czech Republic, the highest by proportion in Europe. The Buddhist temples and cultural centres sprouting up suggest that they are here to stay.

In both countries the Vietnamese have integrated well. The consonant-heavy local languages initially forced them into mute professions such as wholesaling food and textiles. The more industrious flocked to trading centres in Poland and fanned out across the Czech Republic to open grocery stores and even retail chains. Some struck gold: Tao Ngoc Tu, who came as a student, now runs an Asian condiment import com-

pany and is one of Poland’s richest people. “I call myself a bat,” says Pham Chau Thanh, who came as a student in the 1990s. “Neither mouse nor bird: still a Vietnamese head, but Polish thoughts.”

Local acceptance of the Vietnamese contrasts with views on other migrants. Czechs re-elected an anti-immigrant firebrand as president last year, and a survey by the Pew Research Centre, a think-tank, shows that almost half of Poles think there should be less immigration. Many in the Vietnamese diaspora say Czechs and Poles have over time come to see them as a “safe” type of migrant. Anh Tuyet Nguyen, a café-owner in Prague, says she has heard Czechs contrast the “hardworking” Vietnamese with other migrants who they think “leech off the state”.

Yet the welcome can sometimes feel brittle. Many Vietnamese, particularly in Poland, recount instances of finger-pointing on public transport and bullying in schools. After the financial crash of 2008, some Vietnamese-Czechs turned to drug dealing, a trend exaggerated by media scaremongers. As both countries have made it harder for people to immigrate to them, the flow of new arrivals from Vietnam is now a trickle, mostly consisting of people reuniting with relatives who are already in Europe.

Still, second-generation migrants are fitting in well. Most attended local state schools and some are Czech or Polish citizens. Trang Do Thu, a Czech blogger born in Vietnam, says that like many other Vietnamese-Czechs, she learned the local tongue from a Czech nanny while her parents worked long shifts in clothes markets. Her generation’s speaking out against the drug-dealer stereotype was crucial in dispelling it, she says. And pho (noodle soup) is now all the rage in Prague and Warsaw.

Syrians in Turkey

As the economy slows, attitudes towards refugees harden

E arlier this year, shortly after he launched his campaign for mayor in Mersin, a port city on the Mediterranean, Yaphi Secer asked his constituents to identify their most pressing concerns in an online poll. About a tenth chose congestion and public transport. About a fifth mentioned unemployment. A whopping 66% answered: “Syrians”.

Abroad, Turkey has earned praise for its treatment of the 3.6m refugees who have settled here since the start of Syria’s murderous war. But at home, amid deepening economic malaise, frustration with the government’s policy and resentment towards the refugees has been growing. In the recent local elections, in which the opposition defeated the ruling Justice and Development (AK) party in most of the country’s big cities, including Mersin, much of that frustration came to the fore. Opposition politicians regularly played the refugee card. Meral Aksener, the head of the nationalist Iyi party, pledged to send the Syrians packing. One of her colleagues claimed the refugees had to go home for Turkey to start digging itself out of recession. In one northern town, a newly elected mayor from the secular Republican People’s Party (CHP) celebrated his first day in office by cutting off aid to local Syrians.

Even the AK party and its leader, president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a hero to most of the refugees, suggested they had worn out their welcome. The party’s losing candidate in the Istanbul mayoral contest, a former prime minister, warned he would have Syrians who posed a threat to security and public order “grabbed by the ears” and deported. (As The Economist went to press, Turkey’s electoral authority was still weighing AK’s request to have the Istanbul election cancelled and repeated.) Mr Erdogan himself has proposed resettling at least some of the refugees in a safe zone he wants to set up in northern Syria. All of this is legally possible. Syrians in Turkey do not enjoy formal refugee status, which would protect them from deportation, but “temporary protection”, which does not.

The politicians seem to be taking their cue from voters. Resentment towards the refugees seems to be one of the few issues that unites public opinion. A study last year found that 86% of all Turks, wanted the government to send the refugees back to Syria. “Erdogan is a real Muslim, and he opened our doors in the name of humanity,”