

## Commentary: is Iraq the new Vietnam?

BY GRAYSON LYLES | STAFF WRITER

"As the fourth anniversary of the Iraqi conflict nears, the chorus calling the Iraqi conflict the next Vietnam is increasing. When people mentioned the two in the same sentence no more than a year ago, the military scoffed and remained defensive on the subject.

"One of the sharp parallels is that neither Vietnam nor Iraq was the slightest threat to America's national security," said Sen. George McGovern to DemocracyNow. They're small countries with a fraction of the population the United States has, a fraction of the economic and industrial power and fraction of the military power. If we had not intervened in Vietnam we'd have pretty much what we have now, which is a government that is friendly to us."

As George W. Bush's recent visit to Vietnam proves, the nation holds no ill will towards its former enemy as it tries to solidify trade rights with the United States.

There are many things that make the current environment look like the 1960s and 1970s all over again. Of course, the most glaring is the way the administrations work in Vietnam and Iraq.

"I find the basic parallels between the two wars to be the hubris of those mismanaging the conflicts and the misguided notion that the United States can use its overwhelming military might to solve international problems,"



**JULIAN KENNEDY/GUILFORDIAN**  
THOUGH STYLES HAVE CHANGED, SINCE THE 1960S, THE MESSAGE OF PROTESTERS REMAINS THE SAME.

said Director of Friends Center and Campus Ministry Coordinator Max Carter.

Indeed, the waters of politics had gotten so murky by the 1970s that former presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon made all military decisions for the generals in an attempt to maintain po-

litical sway. It has been suggested that Donald Rumsfeld has been responsible for a great deal of the orders given to generals, including the Abu Ghraib prison incident, when prison guards abused and tortured prisoners of war.

Another similarity is the rapidly falling state of morale. In Vietnam, drug use and a lack of a front caused troops to become restless and violent. In Iraq, constant reports of massacres and abuse have popped up, much like in Vietnam.

"In Vietnam we also displayed the same xenophobia and cultural myopia that are on embarrassing display regarding Iraq," said Carter.

American culture is still biased towards different peoples. Many in America still refer to those of Middle Eastern descent with racial slurs or as terrorists. During Vietnam, slang words such as "gook" and "Charlie" were used to demean the Vietnamese.

Because of the Iraq conflict, the average American's perception of Islam is ill-informed and wrong. Islam is a religion placing unity,

peace, and understanding above all else.

Although America was trying to fend off Communism, the Vietnamese were fighting a revolution in an attempt to unify the country during our war with them.

While America is fighting a "war on terror," yet another fight on an ideal like Communism in Vietnam, Iraq is fighting a civil war as the Sunnis and Shiites fight each other for political and religious dominance.

During both the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts, America never officially declared war.

Of course, there are also many differences between the two conflicts.

"In most other ways, there are more differences than similarities," said Carter. "We lost far more military personnel in Vietnam, along with a staggering number of civilian and Vietnamese lives.

The United States is not battling an organized army and national movement in Iraq as we were in Vietnam. The war against Iraq is not generating a counter-cultural movement as did the war against

Vietnam. There also isn't a draft in Iraq."

The last thing to be decided between comparisons of Iraq and Vietnam is the exit. The Vietnam evacuation was nothing short of chaos. It is up to this current administration whether or not the exit of American troops will be a peaceful transition to Iraqi rule or bring about yet another change in government for the weakened nation.

Ken Gilmore, chair of the political science department, has his own predictions concerning American withdrawal.

"We will see a reduction of United States troops in Iraq from

roughly 150,000 at present down to 75,000 or less by the next American elections," he said. "The real question is what will happen to the level of violence in Baghdad over the next two years as we draw down those numbers. At the very least, we can hope

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that, by then, the Iraqi army will be trained and equipped to protect the government and people of Baghdad. Then we limp home. A rather sad definition of 'victory,' don't you think?"

## New beauty trend in Africa causes serious health problems

BY ASHLEY HARDIMAN | STAFF WRITER

Many women in Africa are using bleaching cream to lighten their skin because they associate lighter skin with beauty.

Peter Deng, a sophomore from Sudan, remembers when bleaching cream first started getting popular.

"A lot of my friends tried using the cream," said Deng. "It made their faces and necks look pale, but the rest of their body was their natural skin color. They thought it made them look beautiful."

Skin bleaching, while it is very popular, contains toxic chemicals that are linked to weakened immune systems, organ failure, and even death.

Yaba A. Blay, a doctoral candidate in Temple University's African American studies department, conducted a study last summer, in which she surveyed approximately 600 residents of Accra, and interviewed another 40 who reported bleaching their skin.

"Despite attempts by the Ghanaian government to ban bleaching products and the extreme health risks, including skin cancer, brain and kidney damage and sometimes death, the practice of skin bleaching is seemingly on the rise," Blay, a native of Ghana, said to *Diverse* magazine. "It appears that in the context of global white supremacy, skin bleaching represents an attempt to gain access to the social status and mobility often reserved

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Eleanor Branch

Assistant Professor of English and African-American Studies

not only for whites, but for lighter-skinned persons of African descent."

Eleanor Branch, assistant professor of English and African American studies, remembers seeing light-skinned individuals on the majority of ads in Ghana, where most people are very dark-skinned.

"I feel that skin bleaching is say-

ing that there is something wrong with black skin," said Branch, "but it shows how much influence the Western world holds."

Deng remembers his mother warning his sisters not to use the bleaching cream.

"Luckily my sisters never tried it," said Deng, "but one of my cousins did. I remember it was a really big deal. The people in my family were very angry and upset about it."

The trend of skin bleaching in Africa may seem very similar to the trend of tanning in the United States. Young women here are tanning their skin because they think tanned skin is more beautiful.

"I go tanning because I like looking tan," said sophomore Taylor Brown. "I feel like I don't look as good when I'm not tan. Some people look better tanned, some don't. It depends on the person."

As with skin bleaching, there are many risks involved with tanning.

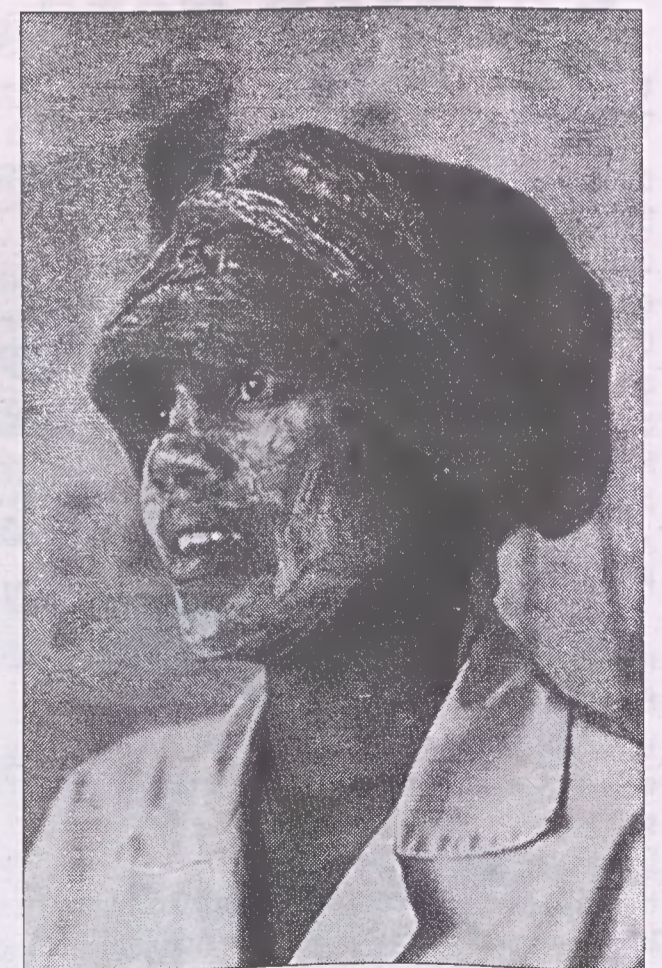
Evidence links UVA, the type of rays emitted from indoor tanning, exposure to malignant melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer.

Overexposure to any UV rays can cause loss of skin elasticity, premature aging, and cancer, but these are harmful effects of tanning booths that do not show up for several years after the damage to the skin is irreversible.

Despite all the risks, women continue to try to make themselves more beautiful by skin bleaching in Africa and tanning in the United States.

In addition to the risks involved, Deng believes skin bleaching is disrespectful.

"I am proud of my heritage and where



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THIS AFRICAN WOMAN IS USING SKIN-BLEACHING CREAM TO LIGHTEN HER SKIN TONE, DESPITE THE KNOWN RISKS.

I came from," said Deng. "It makes me angry to think that so many people would want to hide that."