

Exploring Just and Unjust Wars through Afrofuturism: An Interdisciplinary Approach to International Studies

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Abstract: Understanding just and unjust wars required fresh perspectives that moved beyond traditional frameworks rooted in Western thought. This study explored such perspectives through Afrofuturism, an interdisciplinary approach that combined international studies, cultural theory, and speculative fiction. The study adopted a qualitative, interdisciplinary methodology combining literary analysis, cultural theory, and international relations. It examined key Afrofuturist works –including novels by Octavia Butler and Nnedi Okorafor, music from artists like Sun Ra and Janelle Monáe, and visual art—to uncover alternative perspectives on war, resistance, and liberation. Data collection involved reviewing these creative texts alongside scholarly literature from international relations and postcolonial studies. Using thematic content analysis, the study identified recurring themes of conflict and justice in Afrofuturist narratives and compared them with traditional theories such as realism and liberalism to reveal Afrofuturism’s unique contributions. The study examined just and unjust wars through ethical, legal, and historical perspectives alongside international relations theories and postcolonial critiques. It introduced Afrofuturism to reimagine conflict and resistance, focusing on African diaspora identity, colonial legacies, and creative expressions of liberation. Emphasizing youth, cultural memory, and empathy, the research offered insights for peacebuilding and policy in international studies. The findings demonstrated Afrofuturism’s power to deepen empathy, foster cultural resilience, and inspire global citizenship, offering transformative insights into the nature of war and peace. The research ultimately called for greater inclusion of Afrofuturist perspectives within international studies education, policy development, and peacebuilding initiatives to encourage more imaginative and inclusive approaches toward conflict resolution and social justice.

Keyword : Afrofuturism, just war theory, international studies, cultural resilience, global citizenship, postcolonial trauma.

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Introduction

International relations theories have historically centered Eurocentric perspectives, often marginalizing African worldviews and experiences in discourses on war, peace, and justice. Traditional just war theory, rooted in Western philosophy, sets criteria for determining the morality of war, but these frameworks often fail to account for the complexities and lived experiences of postcolonial societies, particularly in Africa. The continent has endured numerous violent conflicts, many of which were shaped by colonial legacies, resource exploitation, and foreign interventions (Birhan, 2024). A critical problem, therefore, is the inadequacy of existing international studies frameworks to evaluate African conflicts through perspectives that recognize historical injustices, systemic marginalization, and indigenous values. Afrofuturism offers a transformative approach by reimagining Africa's political and cultural future through speculative, decolonial, and Afrocentric visions (Nyong'o, 2025).

Just war theory traditionally consists of *jus ad bellum* (the right to go to war) and *jus in bello* (right conduct within war), with principles such as just cause, right intention, legitimate authority, and proportionality (Van-Steenberghe, 2024). However, applying these principles to African contexts is problematic when the legacies of colonial violence, economic imperialism, and neocolonial structures are ignored. For instance, African liberation struggles during the decolonization era were often labeled as unjust rebellions by colonial powers, despite their legitimate goals of self-determination and resistance to oppression (Constantinou et al, 2025). The failure of just war theory to account for these struggles underscores the need for alternative frameworks. Afrofuturism, while rooted in science fiction and artistic expression, has evolved into a broader intellectual and political project that critiques present injustices and imagines liberated African futures. Scholars such as Wallace and Schwartz (2022) and Waghid and Kriger (2024) emphasize Afrofuturism's potential to challenge dominant narratives and envision justice beyond the confines of Western ideologies. When applied to international studies, Afrofuturism reframes war not merely as a matter of legality and ethics, but as a symptom of deeper structural violence and epistemic injustice. This reframing enables a redefinition of what constitutes a just war – especially one aimed at liberation, resistance, or anti-imperial struggle.

Consider the Rwandan Genocide or the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Mainstream international analyses often reduce these to ethnic tensions or governance failures, ignoring how colonial borders, economic exploitation, and international complicity contributed to these conflicts (Aikawa, 2022). An Afrofuturist approach would interrogate these root causes, question the ethical neutrality of international actors, and center African narratives of healing, justice, and regeneration. It would also embrace indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms and visions of peace embedded in African cosmologies. Moreover, Afrofuturism challenges the dichotomy of just and

unjust wars by introducing a temporal and speculative dimension. It asks not only whether a war is justified in the present, but also how war impacts future African identities, sovereignties, and environments. This is particularly important in assessing the long-term effects of resource wars and foreign military interventions in Africa. For example, the presence of foreign military bases in Djibouti or the Sahel region may be framed as promoting regional security, yet an Afrofuturist critique would expose how such militarization compromises African autonomy and perpetuates external control under the guise of humanitarianism or counterterrorism.

The motivation behind exploring *Just and Unjust Wars through Afrofuturism* stems from the urgent need to decolonize international studies and introduce frameworks that center African epistemologies. Traditional just war theories, largely rooted in Western philosophical traditions, often overlook the historical and structural injustices that shape African conflicts (Shewadeg, 2022). These theories fail to account for how colonialism, resource exploitation, and foreign intervention define what is labeled “just” or “unjust” (Floyd, 2014). This creates a critical gap in international relations scholarship, where African narratives and visions of justice are marginalized. Afrofuturism offers a unique, interdisciplinary perspective to challenge these dominant paradigms by imagining alternative futures grounded in African culture, history, and speculative thought (Clarke, 2019). While Afrofuturism has been widely explored in literature and the arts, its application to political science and international relations remains underdeveloped. This study seeks to fill that gap by using Afrofuturism not just as an artistic expression, but as a critical theoretical tool to reassess global understandings of war, peace, and justice. By doing so, it aims to foreground African agency and reimagine global political structures from a postcolonial and speculative standpoint, offering new possibilities for ethical international engagement.

Definitions and Historical Origins

The concepts of *just* and *unjust* wars have long been central to political philosophy, ethics, and international relations. A *just war* is traditionally defined as a war that meets specific moral and legal criteria aimed at ensuring the conflict is morally justifiable and ethically conducted (Kareklas, 2024). Conversely, an *unjust war* fails to meet these standards and is often characterized by aggression, illegitimate motives, and disproportionate violence. The roots of just war theory can be traced to classical thinkers like Cicero and Augustine, and later to Thomas Aquinas, who formalized the principles into a Christian ethical framework (Milburn & Van-Goozen, 2023). These thinkers sought to reconcile warfare with moral principles, especially within the context of statecraft and religion.

Ethical and Legal Perspectives on War

Ethically, just war theory is divided into two main categories: *jus ad bellum* (justice of war) and *jus in bello* (justice in war). *Jus ad bellum* addresses when it is just to go to war, while *jus in bello* governs conduct during war. According to Giladi and McMillan (2022), a war can be just in its cause but unjust in execution if it violates human rights or targets civilians. These moral considerations intersect with legal frameworks developed in modern international law, particularly through the United Nations Charter and the Geneva Conventions. While ethics emphasize moral reasoning and human dignity, legal perspectives focus on codified norms and treaties that regulate the use of force (Gill & Tibori-Szabó, 2023). The legal dimension of war includes the *principle of non-aggression*, as enshrined in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Exceptions include self-defense under Article 51 or actions authorized by the UN Security Council (United Nations, 1945). Violations of these norms—such as invasions without Security Council approval—are often categorized as unjust wars under international law.

Criteria for Just and Unjust Wars in International Law

International law outlines specific criteria to evaluate the justness of wars. These include *just cause*, *legitimate authority*, *right intention*, *probability of success*, *last resort*, and *proportionality* (Steinhoff, 2014). A war must be waged for a morally sound reason—such as self-defense or humanitarian intervention—by a recognized authority and with the primary aim of restoring peace. Moreover, the means used must be proportionate to the threat, and all non-violent options must be exhausted beforehand. However, these criteria are often inconsistently applied or manipulated. For instance, the 2003 Iraq War was widely criticized as unjust due to questionable evidence of weapons of mass destruction and lack of UN approval (Gazzini, 2022). On the other hand, NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo raised debates about whether humanitarian concerns justify bypassing formal legal processes. These cases highlight the tension between legal norms and ethical imperatives in determining the justness of war. While these frameworks aim to constrain the use of violence, their effectiveness often depends on global power dynamics and political will.

Methodology

The methodology for this study on exploring just and unjust wars through Afrofuturism adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach that blends literary analysis, cultural theory, and international relations. This research seeks to understand how Afrofuturist narratives—expressed through literature, music, visual art, and digital media—offer alternative perspectives on the ethics of war, resistance, and liberation that challenge traditional international studies frameworks. The study

focuses on examining key Afrofuturist works, such as novels by Octavia Butler and Nnedi Okorafor, musical compositions by artists like Sun Ra and Janelle Monáe, as well as visual and digital art that engage with themes of conflict and justice. These creative sources provide rich material for uncovering how Afrofuturism reimagines global conflict and peace beyond conventional paradigms.

Data collection involves gathering and reviewing these cultural texts alongside scholarly literature from international relations, postcolonial studies, and critical theory. The integration of academic sources contextualizes Afrofuturism within broader debates on war ethics and international justice. Through thematic content analysis, the study identifies recurring motifs and ideas relating to just and unjust wars as presented in Afrofuturist works. This method allows for an interpretive understanding of how speculative fiction and artistic expression articulate notions of resistance, historical trauma, and future possibilities. The findings are then compared and contrasted with dominant theories such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism to highlight the distinctive contributions of Afrofuturism to international studies.

Results

Theoretical Foundations in International Studies

1. Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism

International studies are grounded in several major theoretical traditions that offer different explanations for war, peace, and global governance. Realism posits that the international system is anarchic and that states are rational, self-interested actors seeking power and security (Aria, 2025). War, from a realist perspective, is often inevitable due to the absence of a central authority and the perpetual pursuit of national interest. Realists generally regard moral considerations, such as just war principles, as secondary to state survival.

Liberalism, in contrast, emphasizes cooperation, institutions, and the potential for peace through democracy, trade, and international organizations. Liberals believe that war can be reduced or prevented through adherence to international law and collective security mechanisms like the United Nations. From this view, wars can be just if they promote human rights or uphold global norms, as in humanitarian interventions. Constructivism shifts the focus from material power to the role of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping international relations (Guzzini, 2013). Constructivists argue that concepts such as sovereignty, legitimacy, and justice are socially constructed rather than fixed. This perspective allows for a deeper exploration of how different cultures and societies define just and unjust wars, and how these definitions evolve over time through discourse and interaction.

2. Just War Theory and Humanitarian Intervention

Just War Theory serves as a moral guide to determining when and how war can be justified. It consists of *jus ad bellum* (the right to go to war) and *jus in bello* (the conduct within war). Key principles include just cause, legitimate authority, right intention, last resort, proportionality, and discrimination (Huscroft et al, 2014). This framework has significantly influenced both ethical debates and international law, including the Geneva Conventions and the UN Charter. Humanitarian intervention, a modern development within the just war tradition, justifies military action to prevent mass atrocities, such as genocide or ethnic cleansing. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine, endorsed by the UN in 2005, embodies this principle, asserting that the international community has a duty to intervene when a state fails to protect its citizens from grave harm (Doyle, 2015). Examples include NATO's intervention in Kosovo (1999) and the no-fly zone in Libya (2011). However, these interventions often provoke controversy. Critics argue that powerful states may use humanitarian rhetoric to justify military action for strategic or political purposes. Additionally, selective intervention and inconsistent application of just war criteria challenge the legitimacy of humanitarian efforts.

3. Critiques of Conventional War Theories from Postcolonial Viewpoints

Postcolonial scholars offer significant critiques of mainstream war theories, arguing that they often ignore the historical and structural violence inflicted by colonialism and imperialism. These critiques highlight the Eurocentric bias in international law and theory, which tends to validate Western interventions while criminalizing resistance in the Global South (Fonseca, 2018). For instance, liberation movements in Africa and Asia were frequently labeled as insurgencies or terrorist acts, despite being responses to colonial oppression. Moreover, postcolonial perspectives emphasize the need to deconstruct the narrative of the "civilized intervener" and recognize how concepts like just war and humanitarianism have historically been used to legitimize colonial expansion and military domination (Edmonds & Johnston, 2016). These theories advocate for a pluralistic understanding of justice, one that incorporates indigenous philosophies, non-Western epistemologies, and historical contexts of power imbalance. Afrofuturist and decolonial approaches extend this critique by imagining alternative global orders where African voices and experiences are central. They challenge the universalism of Western theories and call for frameworks that acknowledge historical trauma, promote reparative justice, and envision peaceful futures rooted in African agency and cosmology (Myers et al, 2024).

Perspectives from Afrofuturism concept

Afrofuturism stands as a cultural, philosophical, and artistic movement that reimagines Black identity, history, and destiny through the perspective of science

fiction, fantasy, and African cosmologies. It provides a platform where African-descended peoples explore liberation, resilience, and self-determination across time and space. In contrast to historical erasure or marginalization, Afrofuturism places Black experiences at the center of speculative narratives, using imagination as a powerful tool for cultural and political transformation.

1. Origins and Evolution of Afrofuturism

The term "Afrofuturism" emerged in 1994 through the work of cultural critic Mark Dery, who questioned the absence of African Americans in science fiction narratives despite their deep historical connections to technology, displacement, and futurism (Adebisi, 2022). However, the movement's roots extend far deeper. Artists like Sun Ra, whose music and persona evoked space travel and cosmic identity, infused Afrofuturist themes into jazz during the mid-20th century. Writers such as Octavia Butler placed Black protagonists at the forefront of speculative literature, crafting stories that challenged dominant portrayals of race, gender, and power (Ahmed, 2024). Over the decades, Afrofuturism expanded into various creative forms—including visual art, fashion, digital media, and film. The global success of *Black Panther* (2018) highlighted a futuristic African society untouched by colonialism, demonstrating Afrofuturism's power to shape mainstream narratives.

2. Key Themes: Speculation, Technology, Liberation

At its core, Afrofuturism weaves together themes of speculation, technology, and liberation. Speculative storytelling enables the construction of alternative realities, futures, and histories—offering space to question oppressive structures and imagine transformative possibilities. Rather than escaping reality, this form of narrative creates opportunities to challenge injustice and reshape the future. Technology appears in Afrofuturist works as both a symbol of innovation and a reminder of historical trauma. From slave ships and surveillance systems to digital empowerment and advanced machinery, technology reflects both the harm endured and the tools of future liberation (Diamond, 2015). Afrofuturist creators harness this duality to critique systemic control while proposing tech-infused visions of Black advancement and autonomy. Liberation serves as the heart of Afrofuturism. Stories often center around freedom from colonization, racial injustice, or societal erasure. Through speculative worlds, Afrofuturist works explore self-determination, spiritual restoration, and cultural resurgence. These themes not only uplift but also encourage critical reflection on current social conditions.

3. Afrofuturism and African Diaspora Identity

Afrofuturism resonates deeply across the African diaspora, offering a means to reconnect scattered histories and fractured identities. For communities shaped through slavery, colonialism, and displacement, Afrofuturism creates continuity—

linking past struggles with future possibilities. Ancestral memory and futuristic vision converge, allowing a fuller expression of identity that defies linear time. Diasporic individuals see themselves portrayed as creators, scientists, explorers, and visionaries—roles often denied within dominant global narratives. This repositioning fosters pride, unity, and cultural healing. Across borders, Afrofuturism cultivates a shared language of resistance and imagination, linking African-descended communities in a global conversation about justice and belonging.

Intersecting Afrofuturism with Global Conflict Narratives

Afrofuturism offers a radical perspective for examining global conflict narratives, not just in terms of warfare but through the deeper layers of memory, power, and imagination. Where traditional war stories often center dominant powers and linear histories, Afrofuturist works disrupt that structure, giving voice to those pushed to the margins. Through speculative storytelling, the pain of past violence merges with hope for liberated futures—producing visions where resistance thrives and imperial histories unravel.

1. Reimagining War and Resistance through Afrofuturist Fiction

Afrofuturist fiction does not merely imagine futuristic battles; it reframes the meaning of conflict itself. Authors like Nnedi Okorafor and Octavia Butler explore war from perspectives rooted in ancestral memory, spiritual strength, and communal resistance. In Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993), violence is not an isolated event—it grows from systemic injustice and environmental decay. The protagonist survives not through brute force, but through empathy and vision, challenging conventional portrayals of strength. Similarly, Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* (2010) weaves post-apocalyptic war with African mythology, confronting genocide and patriarchy through a deeply rooted sense of cultural power. In these works, war becomes both literal and metaphorical—an internal and external struggle shaped through identity, history, and resistance (Oku, 2021).

2. Decolonizing the Future: Challenging Imperial Histories

Afrofuturism rejects the idea that the future belongs only to the West or to technological elites. Instead, it calls attention to how colonial violence continues to shape global systems—economically, politically, and culturally. The future imagined through Afrofuturism detaches from Western linearity and introduces cyclical time, ancestral guidance, and indigenous technologies. These futures do not erase the past; they carry it forward as a source of wisdom and power. Afrofuturist visuals and literature dismantle dominant narratives that glorify conquest or suppress the voices of colonized peoples. They challenge the portrayal of Africa and its diaspora as passive or backward. Wakanda, the fictional nation in *Black Panther* (2018), functions as a symbolic act of decolonizing the imagination—showing an uncolonized,

technologically advanced African society rooted in tradition and autonomy. This vision does not depend on Western validation but stands firmly in cultural confidence.

3. The Role of Futurism in Political Awakening

Futurism within Afrofuturist thought plays a critical role in awakening political consciousness. It creates space to ask difficult questions: What does justice look like beyond state borders? How can societies repair the damage caused through colonial and imperial violence? Through futuristic storytelling, activists and artists alike explore these questions while inspiring new generations to imagine worlds built on equity and care. Afrofuturism fosters critical thought not only through critique but through hope. The act of imagining a future where Black lives flourish – free from war, displacement, and systemic oppression – acts as a radical form of protest. It transforms grief into vision, memory into movement, and despair into creative force. In this intersection of conflict and imagination, Afrofuturism reshapes global war narratives. It offers not escape, but clarity – a way of seeing through the debris of history and into a future sculpted with intention, freedom, and dignity.

Colonialism, War, and Resistance Movements in Africa

The history of Africa cannot be separated from the violence and disruption caused through colonialism. Wars tied to European expansion left a trail of broken societies, stolen resources, and fractured identities. These were not isolated skirmishes or diplomatic disagreements – they were violent impositions of foreign control, often justified through the language of civilization, progress, or religion. At the heart of these invasions lay a hunger for land, labor, and wealth, with African lives caught in the balance.

1. The Nature of Colonial Wars and European Expansion

Colonial wars in Africa unfolded through military campaigns, forced treaties, and manipulation of existing local rivalries. European powers competed over territories, redrawing Africa's borders without regard for ethnic, cultural, or political realities (Foucher, 2020). The so-called "Scramble for Africa" involved more than just diplomatic agreements in Europe – it required armies, guns, and brutal conquests on African soil. France, Britain, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal all played roles in these campaigns, turning African resistance into targets for pacification. One of the most notorious examples, the Congo Free State under King Leopold II of Belgium, witnessed atrocities on a massive scale, with millions suffering under forced labor and violence (Sassen, 2014).

2. Resistance Movements and Anti-Imperialist Struggles

Despite the overwhelming military advantage held through colonial powers, African communities did not remain passive. Resistance flared across the continent –

some movements took the form of open warfare, others used spiritual leadership, sabotage, or diplomacy. Leaders such as Samori Touré in West Africa, the Zulu under Shaka and later Cetshwayo, and the Herero people in Namibia all fought against European occupation, often at great cost (Shome, 2023). Ethiopia, under Emperor Menelik II, famously defeated Italian forces at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, standing as a powerful symbol of African resilience. As colonial control deepened, resistance became more organized and ideologically grounded. The 20th century saw the rise of anti-imperialist movements that connected African liberation to global currents of socialism, Pan-Africanism, and self-determination. These movements rejected not only the physical presence of colonizers but also the systems and mindsets imposed through colonial rule.

3. The Legacy of Liberation Wars in Contemporary Africa

Liberation struggles left lasting marks on African nations. Countries such as Algeria, Kenya, Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe gained independence through bloody, protracted wars. These movements forged a strong sense of national identity and pride, though the aftermath was not without complexity. The challenges of building post-colonial states, managing ethnic divisions, and healing from generational trauma have been immense. Nonetheless, the spirit of resistance continues to shape political and cultural life. Heroes of these wars are celebrated, lessons from past struggles fuel modern movements, and the memory of defiance informs contemporary calls for justice, reparations, and sovereignty. Colonialism's shadow lingers, but Africa's story is equally defined through the courage of those who refused to be conquered.

Afrofuturist Expressions of Liberation and Justice

Afrofuturism opens space where Black identity, imagination, and justice come alive through storytelling, sound, and visual language. Its power rests not only in creating distant galaxies or advanced cities but in revealing real struggles for freedom, dignity, and future-making. Liberation in Afrofuturist work does not emerge as a gift or legal formality—it unfolds through resistance, survival, and cultural memory. Across literature, music, visual art, and digital platforms, Afrofuturist creators construct vibrant visions where Black life thrives, untouched and unbroken.

1. Literary Narratives of Freedom and Survival

Afrofuturist literature holds liberation at its core. Authors like Octavia Butler, N.K. Jemisin, and Nnedi Okorafor explore survival in broken worlds, often shaped through social collapse, racial oppression, or environmental disaster. In Butler's *Kindred* (1979), time travel links a modern Black woman to her enslaved ancestors, forcing her to navigate both historical violence and her own survival. Rather than present freedom as a clear endpoint, the novel explores its emotional and physical cost.

Jemisin's *Broken Earth* trilogy brings forth a world ruled through oppression, where power and marginalization echo real histories of racialized control (Iles, 2019). These works reframe struggle as part of the journey toward justice – one that refuses to erase trauma but demands transformation.

2. Music, Visual Art, and Digital Storytelling

Afrofuturist expression also lives in rhythm, color, and screen. Through music, artists like Sun Ra, Janelle Monáe, and Erykah Badu construct sonic worlds that move beyond limitation. Sun Ra imagined himself from Saturn, using jazz as a portal for cosmic liberation. Janelle Monáe's *Dirty Computer* (2018) blends pop, funk, and narrative film to speak on queerness, race, surveillance, and freedom, portraying herself as an android fighting for love and agency. These sounds do more than entertain – they awaken political imagination. Visual artists like Wangechi Mutu and Stacey Robinson craft Afrofuturist images where bodies defy colonial aesthetics, technology fuses with nature, and spiritual legacies rise in new forms. Their work challenges the gaze that has historically distorted Black identity. Online spaces also serve as vital ground for digital storytelling. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Webtoons give space for Black creators to remix folklore, sci-fi, and history into accessible, grassroots narratives that reshape public understanding of race, justice, and technology (Kolhatkar, 2023).

3. Empowerment through Speculative Resistance

At its heart, Afrofuturism resists silencing. It resists histories written without Black voices, futures imagined without Black bodies, and technologies developed without Black needs in mind. Through speculative resistance, creators rewrite power relations. Instead of imagining a distant utopia, Afrofuturism demands a future grounded in justice now. This act of imagining becomes itself an act of empowerment – a way to assert presence, agency, and creative force. Afrofuturism does not forget the past. It carries ancestral memory forward, armed with vision and voice. In doing so, it liberates the future – not as fantasy, but as promise.

Youth, Conflict, and Cultural Memory in Afrofuturist Thought

Afrofuturism offers a hopeful and complex framework for understanding how youth engage with conflict, memory, and healing within global Black experiences. Young people are not simply passive recipients of history or victims of violence; they emerge as active reimagers of peace and agents of cultural transformation. Through Afrofuturist thought, youth navigate inherited trauma while envisioning futures where healing and resilience shape individual and collective identities.

1. The Role of Youth in Reimagining Global Peace

Young people within Afrofuturist narratives often embody the potential to redefine what peace means beyond the absence of war. They challenge inherited systems of violence and oppression through creativity and critical engagement. For example, in Octavia Butler's works, youthful protagonists possess visionary capacities that allow them to see alternatives to conflict and devastation (Giroux, 2015). Similarly, contemporary Afrofuturist artists and activists use technology, social media, and cultural production to articulate new forms of peace grounded in justice, equity, and shared humanity. This generation's engagement with Afrofuturism transforms trauma into motivation and sparks new dialogues about reconciliation and coexistence.

2. Intergenerational Memory and Trauma

Afrofuturism deeply acknowledges the weight of intergenerational trauma, especially resulting from colonial violence, slavery, and systemic racism. Youth inherit not only histories of pain but also powerful stories of resistance and survival. This dual inheritance shapes their understanding of identity and justice. The speculative nature of Afrofuturism allows for the exploration of these memories as living, dynamic forces that inform present action. Through narrative devices such as time travel, ancestral spirits, or alternate timelines, Afrofuturist stories connect youth with elders, creating a dialogue across generations that facilitates processing trauma and reclaiming cultural continuity (Wallace et al, 2014). This connection fosters a deeper sense of belonging and responsibility toward collective healing.

3. Healing, Reconstruction, and Cultural Resilience

Afrofuturism offers tools for healing fractured identities and reconstructing futures beyond trauma's shadow. The imaginative spaces crafted within Afrofuturist thought become sites of cultural resilience – where restoration of spirit and community takes precedence. Art, literature, and music all contribute to processes of healing, enabling individuals and communities to reclaim narratives often suppressed or erased. For example, visual artists incorporate symbols from African traditions intertwined with futuristic elements, illustrating the ongoing survival and adaptation of cultural heritage (Huscroft et al, 2014). Moreover, healing in Afrofuturism does not suggest a return to a pre-trauma past but encourages building new realities informed by lessons learned and hope nurtured. This reconstructive approach supports youth in cultivating strength and agency, helping them to envision societies where justice and peace prevail. Afrofuturist thought thus empowers young people to carry forward legacies of resilience while crafting innovative solutions to conflict's enduring challenges.

Empathy and Global Citizenship through Afrofuturism

Afrofuturism extends beyond art and storytelling, serving as a profound tool for fostering empathy and nurturing global citizenship. Through its imaginative and critical approach, Afrofuturism connects individuals across cultures and histories, encouraging a shared sense of responsibility toward justice, peace, and human dignity. In a world marked by conflict and division, Afrofuturism offers pathways to global awareness that emphasize common humanity while respecting cultural uniqueness.

1. Afrofuturism as a Tool for Global Awareness

Afrofuturism's speculative worlds invite audiences to step into experiences often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream narratives. This imaginative shift promotes understanding of complex histories and contemporary realities shaped through colonialism, displacement, and racial injustice (Aria, 2025). The movement challenges ethnocentric perspectives, urging viewers and readers to appreciate diverse modes of existence and knowledge. Through futuristic visions, Afrofuturism exposes interconnectedness between local struggles and global systems of power, making abstract concepts tangible. Such narratives nurture awareness not simply as intellectual understanding, but as emotional engagement – opening hearts and minds to the struggles and aspirations of others across continents.

2. Connecting Fictional Resistance to Real-World Struggles

Afrofuturism bridges the gap between imaginative resistance and tangible social movements. The stories of characters who fight oppression in dystopian or otherworldly settings reflect real-world battles against racism, inequality, and authoritarianism. For instance, Octavia Butler's novels portray protagonists who endure and transform violent systems, inspiring readers to consider their own roles within contemporary struggles for justice (Gazzini, 2022). Likewise, artistic expressions such as Janelle Monáe's concept albums combine narrative and activism, raising consciousness around issues like gender, sexuality, and racial identity. Weaving fiction with themes of resilience and defiance aids Afrofuturism to empower individuals and communities to envision resistance as both a creative and practical act, encouraging solidarity across diverse movements.

3. Education for Peace and Justice through Creative Media

Creative media grounded in Afrofuturist principles hold transformative potential for education. Schools, community centers, and digital platforms increasingly integrate Afrofuturist content to engage learners in discussions about history, ethics, and social change. These narratives challenge dominant historical accounts and provide alternative frameworks that center marginalized voices (Gill & Tibori-Szabó, 2023). Through films, literature, music, and interactive media, learners develop critical thinking skills alongside empathy – understanding conflict not only as

political struggle but as deeply human experience. Afrofuturism's blend of imagination and reality encourages young people to become active global citizens, motivated to promote peace and justice within their communities and beyond. In this way, Afrofuturism moves beyond entertainment, functioning as a dynamic space where empathy grows, and global citizenship takes shape. It cultivates awareness that justice is interconnected and requires ongoing commitment. Through its creative power, Afrofuturism inspires individuals to envision futures rooted in equity, respect, and collective care, offering a hopeful counter-narrative to division and violence.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This discussion reveals how Afrofuturism offers a fresh, critical perspective to understand war, peace, and resistance within global and African contexts. It challenges traditional war narratives by centering Black voices, histories, and futures, emphasizing liberation, resilience, and justice. The theoretical grounding in international studies – spanning realism, liberalism, and postcolonial critiques – gains new depth when intersected with Afrofuturist thought, which foregrounds imagination as a tool for political awakening. The role of youth and cultural memory emerges as vital in reimagining peace beyond conventional frameworks, while Afrofuturism's creative expressions through literature, music, and visual arts foster empathy and global citizenship. These insights underscore that peacebuilding requires addressing historical trauma and envisioning futures rooted in equity and collective care.

Incorporating Afrofuturism into international studies encourages scholars and practitioners to expand analytical frameworks beyond state-centric, Eurocentric perspectives. This approach foregrounds marginalized experiences, revealing how colonial legacies shape contemporary conflicts and resistance movements. It pushes peacebuilding efforts toward more holistic, culturally grounded methods that integrate memory, creativity, and identity. Afrofuturism's emphasis on speculative futures enables imagining peace not just as absence of violence but as active, ongoing reconstruction involving social justice, reconciliation, and empowerment. This reframing has the potential to influence policy design, conflict resolution strategies, and international cooperation models that are more inclusive and adaptive to diverse worldviews.

Curriculum development in international studies should incorporate Afrofuturist literature, art, and theory to enhance students' understanding of global conflict, identity, and resistance. This inclusion promotes critical thinking and empathy while diversifying perspectives beyond traditional Western paradigms. Research initiatives should support interdisciplinary projects that explore Afrofuturism's impact on peacebuilding, youth activism, and cultural memory, filling gaps where conventional theories fall short. Further, advocacy efforts must leverage

Afrofuturist narratives to amplify marginalized voices in international policy discussions, ensuring that justice and equity remain central in peace processes. Engaging with Afrofuturism encourages a richer, more nuanced approach to international studies—one that honors past struggles and champions visionary futures. Embracing these perspectives strengthens the potential for sustainable peace and social transformation worldwide.

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