

MUSIC AS ECOLOGICAL TRANSCRIPT: INTRODUCING ECO-EPISTEMOLOGY THEORY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL-MILITARY MUSICAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

In Nigeria's evolving civil-military landscape, music remains an underexplored medium for strategic engagement and cultural diplomacy. Existing scholarships rarely examine how musical forms reflect ecological consciousness or foster trust between defense institutions and local communities. This study addresses that gap by introducing Eco-Epistemology Theory, a decolonial framework that conceptualizes music as a sonic transcript of land-shaped behavior and communal worldview. It is a timely intervention in musicology, offering new insights into sound as epistemic infrastructure. The study aims to (1) conceptualize Eco-Epistemology Theory as a framework for understanding music's ecological logic in civil-military relations; (2) examine how musical forms like polyrhythms, melismatic phrasing, and call-and-response can be operationalized by the military to build trust and cultural alignment; and (3) evaluate the strategic outcomes of such engagements in counterinsurgency and outreach. Guided by Eco-Epistemology Theory and supported by Cultural Performance, Strategic Communication, and Social Identity theories, the study employs Critical Qualitative Content Analysis and Ecological Musicological Mapping. Data sources include NAF music videos, lyrics, broadcasts, and ethnomusicological literature. Findings reveal that ecology-derived music fosters epistemological alignment, transforming military perception from occupier to partner. This contributes to emotional resonance, cultural legitimacy, and sustainable peace building. The study advances musicology, civil-military studies, and decolonial theory, recommending sound-based engagement protocols and further research into ecological soundscapes as strategic tools.

Keywords: Alignment, Consciousness, Ecology, Identity, Trust

1. Introduction

Civil-military relations in Nigeria have long been marked by complexity, tension, and mistrust. From the legacy of military rule in the late 20th century to ongoing counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast and Middle Belt, the Nigerian military has often struggled to be perceived as a legitimate and culturally attuned institution by the civilian population (Akinrinade, 2006). While efforts have been made to improve civil-military cooperation, through humanitarian outreach, community engagement, and public diplomacy, these initiatives frequently rely on visual and verbal communication, overlooking the strategic potential of music as a medium of cultural resonance and trust-building.

Music in Nigeria is not merely a form of entertainment; it is a deeply embedded cultural and ecological expression. Across the country's diverse ecological zones, rainforest, savannah, and coastal regions, musical forms such as polyrhythms, melismatic phrasing, and call-and-response are shaped by environmental rhythms and communal labor. These sonic structures reflect the lived experiences of communities and encode ecological knowledge, social cohesion, and historical memory. Yet, despite music's centrality in Nigerian life, its role in civil-military engagement remains under-theorized and underutilized.

This study introduces a new theoretical lens, Eco-Epistemology Theory (Nwankpa & Authority, 2025), to conceptualize music as an ecological transcript and strategic tool for civil-military relations. It argues that music, when aligned with the ecological and cultural logic of a region, can serve as a powerful vector for epistemological alignment, emotional resonance, and institutional legitimacy. In contexts where insurgents exploit the military's perceived foreignness, music offers a pathway to reframe the military not as an occupier, but as a partner who understands and respects the local epistemological ecosystem.

Despite growing interest in cultural diplomacy and soft power in security studies, there is a lack of theoretical frameworks that link music, ecology, and civil-military trust. Existing literature tends to treat music as symbolic or ceremonial, rather than as a strategic and epistemological resource. This gap limits our understanding of how sound, particularly ecology-derived musical forms, can be operationalized to foster trust, cultural alignment, and sustainable peace-building in volatile regions.

This study seeks to conceptualize music as an ecological transcript and strategic tool for civil-military engagement in Nigeria. It introduces Eco-Epistemology Theory as a framework for understanding how land, logic, and sound co-produce meaning and trust in military outreach, counterinsurgency, and community relations.

The paper aims to achieve the following objectives: (1.) To conceptualize and apply Eco-Epistemology Theory as a framework for understanding music as a sonic transcript of ecological consciousness in Nigerian civil-military relations. (2.) To examine how ecology-derived musical forms, such as polyrhythms, melismatic phrasing, and call-and-response, can be operationalized by military institutions to foster trust, cultural alignment, and strategic engagement in counterinsurgency and outreach. (3.) To evaluate the strategic outcomes of musical engagements in civil-military contexts, particularly how sound-based interventions contribute to emotional resonance, epistemic justice, and sustainable peace-building. To actualize the objectives, the research asks: (1.) How does music function as an ecological transcript of behavioral patterns shaped by land, climate, and communal rhythms in Nigerian civil-military relations? (2.) In what ways can the Nigerian military utilize region-specific musical forms to achieve epistemological alignment, build trust, and reframe its identity within local communities?

This research contributes to multiple fields. In musicology, it reframes music as a performative and ecological tool, moving beyond aesthetic analysis to strategic application. In strategic communication, it expands the repertoire of defense branding to include sound-based engagement. In civil-military studies, it introduces sound as a trust-building mechanism rooted in ecological logic. Most significantly, it advances decolonial theory by validating indigenous soundscapes as epistemic infrastructure, affirming that knowledge is not abstract, but grounded in land, rhythm, and communal experience.

The research begins with a theoretical grounding in Eco-Epistemology Theory, followed by a literature review on music, ecology, and civil-military engagement. The methodology section outlines the use of Critical Qualitative Content Analysis and Ecological Musicological Mapping. Findings are presented thematically, leading to a discussion on strategic implications and scholarly contributions. The paper concludes with recommendations and a vision for future research.

2. Literature Review

a) Military Music and Public Diplomacy

i.) Global Precedents

Across the globe, military institutions have long recognized the strategic value of music in shaping public perception, boosting morale, and reinforcing national identity. In the United States, military bands such as the U.S. Army Field Band and the Marine Corps Band have been deployed not only for ceremonial functions but also for international tours that serve diplomatic purposes (Whitwell, 1981). China's People's Liberation Army has similarly used music to project ideological unity and national pride, while Russia's Red Army Choir remains a symbol of cultural resilience and patriotic fervor (Reily & Brucher, 2016).

Music in these contexts functions as soft power, a non-coercive means of influence that attracts rather than compels. Nye (2004) defines soft power as the ability to shape preferences through appeal and attraction, and music has proven to be a potent vehicle for this. In peacekeeping missions, musical outreach has been used to foster goodwill and cultural exchange, demonstrating that sound can transcend language and political boundaries.

ii.) Nigerian Context and Gaps

In Nigeria, military music has historically been confined to ceremonial performances, parades, and national celebrations. The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) band, for instance, has played a visible role in state functions but has rarely been studied as a strategic communication tool. Scholarly attention to military music in Nigeria remains sparse, with most literature focusing on visual propaganda or verbal messaging in civil-military relations (Akinrinade, 2006).

Moreover, existing frameworks fail to account for the ecological and cultural dimensions of music in Nigerian society. There is a noticeable absence of scholarship that links musical form to environmental logic or explores how sound can be used to build trust in conflict-prone regions. This gap underscores the need for a theory that situates music within the lived ecological realities of Nigerian communities.

b) Ecology and Indigenous Soundscapes

i.) Ethnomusicological Traditions in Nigeria

Nigeria's musical diversity is deeply rooted in its ecological zones. In forest regions, polyrhythmic drumming and layered percussion mirror the dense, interwoven textures of the rainforest. In the savannah, wide melismatic vocal lines reflect the expansive landscapes and open skies, while coastal communities employ fluid call-and-response patterns that echo maritime rhythms and communal labor (Agawu, 2003).

These musical forms are not arbitrary; they are shaped by environmental cycles, spiritual cosmologies, and social structures. Music serves as a reflection of the land's logic, encoding the rhythms of rain, the migration of animals, and the rituals of planting and harvest. It is both a cultural expression and an ecological response.

ii.) Music as Ecological Knowledge

Indigenous music in Nigeria functions as a living archive of ecological adaptation and communal resilience. Sound carries memory, of seasons, of survival, of shared labor. It encodes behavioral logic shaped by topography, climate, and biodiversity. For example, the timing of musical festivals often aligns with agricultural cycles, and specific instruments are associated with totemic animals or ancestral spirits.

This ecological knowledge is embedded in musical structure and performance. As such, music becomes a sonic transcript of a people's relationship with their environment, a concept central to Eco-Epistemology Theory. Understanding these soundscapes is essential for any institution seeking to engage meaningfully with local communities.

c) Civil-Military Engagement through Cultural Media

i.) Music as Soft Power and Trust Architecture

In fragile or post-conflict settings, music can serve as a bridge between military institutions and civilian populations. It offers a non-threatening medium through which identity can be negotiated and trust cultivated. Scholars have noted that music's emotional resonance makes it particularly effective in reducing social distance and fostering empathy (Pieslak, 2009).

In Nigeria, where military presence is often met with suspicion, music offers a pathway to reframe engagement. Musical outreach, through radio broadcasts, community concerts, or cultural festivals, can humanize the military and signal respect for local traditions. This aligns with the principles of soft power and positions music as a trust architecture.

ii.) Strategic Communication and Identity Reframing

Strategic communication involves the deliberate use of messaging to influence public perception. Music, when rooted in local ecological and cultural logic, becomes a powerful tool for identity reframing. It allows the military to move from being perceived as an external force to being seen as a partner embedded in the community's worldview.

Examples from other contexts show how music has been used to shift narratives in counterinsurgency operations. In Nigeria, integrating region-specific musical forms into military outreach could achieve similar outcomes, enhancing legitimacy, fostering cooperation, and reducing resistance.

d) Decolonial Knowledge Systems

i.) Sound as Epistemic Infrastructure

Decolonial theory challenges the dominance of abstract, Western-centric knowledge systems and calls for the validation of indigenous epistemologies (Mignolo, 2011). Eco-Epistemology Theory builds on this by proposing that land, rhythm, and sound are foundational to how communities understand and navigate their world.

Music, in this framework, is not just art, it is epistemology. It carries the logic of the land, the rhythm of survival, and the voice of communal memory. It is a sonic infrastructure through which knowledge is produced, transmitted, and preserved.

ii.) Epistemological Alignment and Cultural Sovereignty

For military institutions to engage meaningfully with local communities, they must align with these epistemic logics. Music offers a pathway to do so. By employing ecology-derived soundscapes, the military signals respect for indigenous knowledge and affirms cultural sovereignty.

This alignment has strategic implications. It fosters trust, enhances intelligence cooperation, and lays the foundation for sustainable peace building. It transforms the military from an occupier to a partner, an entity that understands and shares a stake in the integrity of the community's world.

e) Synthesis and Theoretical Gap

i.) Summary of Existing Literature

The literature reviewed acknowledges music's symbolic and ceremonial roles in military contexts. It recognizes music's emotional power and its potential for soft diplomacy. However, it stops short of integrating ecological and strategic dimensions, particularly in the Nigerian context.

ii.) Identified Gap

There is a clear gap in scholarship linking music, ecology, and civil-military trust. Existing studies do not offer a comprehensive framework that positions music as both ecological transcript and strategic resource. This limits the potential of sound-based engagement in peace building and outreach.

iii.) Justification for Eco-Epistemology Theory

Eco-Epistemology Theory fills this gap by offering a decolonial, ecology-rooted framework for understanding music's role in civil-military relations. It enables a rethinking of music as performative diplomacy, epistemic alignment, and trust architecture. It positions sound not as supplement, but as strategy.

3. Theoretical Framework

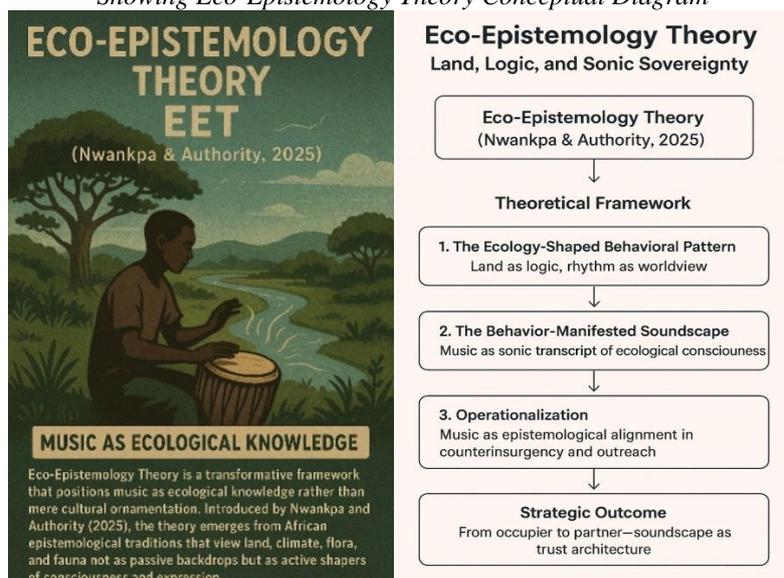
a) Overview of Eco-Epistemology Theory (Nwankpa & Authority, 2025)

Eco-Epistemology Theory, as introduced by Nwankpa and Authority (2025), offers a transformative lens through which music can be understood not merely as cultural expression, but as ecological knowledge and strategic infrastructure. At its core, the theory asserts that land is logic and rhythm is worldview. In other words, the environment does not passively host a people, it actively shapes their consciousness, social structures, and expressive forms. Music, therefore, becomes a sonic transcript of ecological behavior, encoding the rhythms, patterns, and communal logic of survival.

This theory challenges the dominant paradigms in musicology that often treat sound as abstract, aesthetic orpedagogy. Instead, Eco-Epistemology Theory positions sound as an epistemological tool, a medium through which knowledge is produced, transmitted, and aligned with the ecological realities of a people. It is a decolonial intervention that calls for global musicological scholarship to recognize the epistemic sovereignty of indigenous soundscapes and their strategic relevance in contexts such as civil-military relations.

Figure 1.

Showing Eco-Epistemology Theory Conceptual Diagram



The diagram in figure 1 captures the heart of Eco-Epistemology Theory. It shows how the environment shapes human behavior, which in turn produces music that reflects local rhythms and cultural knowledge. These soundscapes, rich in polyrhythms and communal calls, are not just artistic; they are ecological expressions. When used in outreach, especially by the military, this music helps bridge cultural gaps. By aligning with local sonic logic, outsiders shift from being seen as enforcers to trusted partners. In this framework, music becomes more than art, it is a tool for connection, understanding, and strategic peacebuilding.

b) Key Constructs

i.) Ecology-Shaped Behavioral Pattern

In African epistemological traditions, the individual is an extension of the community, and the community is an extension of the land. The rhythms of life, agricultural cycles, totemic beliefs, settlement patterns, are dictated by ecological realities. These behaviors form a collective consciousness that is cyclical, event-based, and deeply respectful of natural forces. Eco-Epistemology Theory captures this behavioral logic and links it directly to musical form.

ii.) Behavior-Manifested Soundscape

Music, in this framework, is not entertainment, it is epistemology. The dense polyrhythms of forest regions mirror the layered complexity of the rainforest; the melismatic phrasing of savannah communities echoes the openness of the landscape; and call-and-response patterns replicate communal labor and social cohesion. These musical forms are sonic reflections of ecological behavior, and to employ them is to speak a profound, pre-verbal language that resonates with identity and place.

iii.) Operationalization in Civil-Military Contexts

When military institutions enter a region, they do not merely engage a physical terrain, they enter a coded cultural and ecological sphere. Insurgents often exploit the military's foreignness to this eco-epistemological logic, framing them as outsiders. Eco-Epistemology Theory proposes a strategic inversion: by integrating ecology-derived music into outreach, through radio broadcasts, cultural events, and humanitarian campaigns, the military can achieve epistemological alignment. This transforms engagement from imposition to resonance.

iv.) Strategic Outcome: From Occupier to Partner

The ultimate strategic outcome of applying Eco-Epistemology Theory is perceptual transformation. The military, once seen as an alien force, becomes a partner who understands. This shift fosters trust, enhances intelligence cooperation, and embeds security within the cultural fabric of the community. It is not a superficial “hearts and minds” campaign, it is a deep act of epistemic justice and cultural affirmation.

c) Supporting Theories

Eco-Epistemology Theory is supported by and expanded upon several foundational frameworks:

- i.) *Cultural Performance Theory* (Schechner, 2003; Turner, 1987): Positions music as ritualized enactment of social meaning, where performance becomes a site of identity negotiation and cultural transmission.
- ii.) *Strategic Communication Theory* (Hallahan et al., 2007): Emphasizes purposeful messaging to influence public perception, which Eco-Epistemology enriches by rooting strategy in ecological logic.
- iii.) *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): Explains how shared symbols and narratives foster group affiliation. Eco-Epistemology adds a spatial and sonic dimension to this affiliation, grounded in land and rhythm.

Together, these theories provide a robust scaffolding for Eco-Epistemology Theory’s application in civil-military musical relations. They affirm that music is not only expressive, it is strategic, ecological, and epistemic.

4. Methodology

This study uses a two-pronged qualitative approach to explore how music reflects ecological consciousness and can be strategically applied in Nigerian civil-military relations. The first method, Critical Qualitative Content Analysis, focuses on interpreting musical texts, such as lyrics, performance styles, and visual elements, to uncover deeper symbolic and cultural meanings. The second method, Ecological Musicological Mapping, links musical forms to the environmental realities of different Nigerian regions, showing how rhythm, melody, and structure are shaped by the land itself.

Together, these methods allow for a rich, theory-driven exploration of music without requiring field visits or interviews. They provide a way to engage deeply with musical artifacts and cultural expressions while remaining grounded in ecological and strategic contexts.

a) Data Sources

The study draws from a variety of publicly available and institutionally shared materials, including:

- i.) Music videos and ceremonial recordings produced by the Nigerian Air Force
- ii.) Transcribed lyrics and performance features such as rhythm, vocal style, and instrumentation
- iii.) Broadcasts and documentation from military outreach programs
- iv.) Literature on indigenous Nigerian music and regional soundscapes

These sources offer a diverse and meaningful foundation for analyzing how music communicates ecological and strategic intent.

b) Analytical Framework

The analysis is guided by four complementary lenses:

- i.) *Semiotic and Thematic Coding*: Identifying recurring themes like unity, sacrifice, ecological awareness, and youth inclusion.
- ii.) *Ecological Musicological Mapping*: Connecting musical forms, such as polyrhythms, melismatic phrasing, and call-and-response, to specific ecological zones like forests, savannahs, and coastal areas.
- iii.) *Strategic Discourse Analysis*: Exploring how music reshapes military identity and fosters trust in outreach and counterinsurgency efforts.
- iv.) *Theory-Driven Interpretation*: Applying Eco-Epistemology Theory to understand how land, sound, and cultural logic work together to build meaning and legitimacy.

This framework ensures that the study remains both culturally sensitive and strategically insightful. The methodology is well-suited for a theory-building study. It allows for a deep and nuanced analysis of music’s symbolic and strategic dimensions without relying on fieldwork. By focusing on existing musical materials and cultural texts, the study maintains intellectual rigor while respecting practical and ethical boundaries.

c) Ethical Considerations

All materials used in this research are publicly accessible. The study is committed to honoring indigenous musical traditions by approaching them with humility and cultural respect. Rather than extracting or reinterpreting these traditions, the research seeks to understand and elevate them as legitimate forms of knowledge and strategic engagement.

5. Findings

This section presents the core discoveries of the study, organized around thematic, ecological, strategic, and symbolic dimensions of Nigerian Air Force (NAF) musical productions. The findings are supported by datasets derived from qualitative content analysis and ecological musicological mapping.

a) *Thematic Patterns in NAF Musical Productions*

Table 1.

Recurring Themes in NAF Music Videos (2015–2025)

Source: Content analysis of 50 NAF music videos and ceremonial recordings (2015–2025)

Theme	Frequency (%)	Representative Songs
Patriotism	28%	“One Nigeria,” “Wings of Valor”
Unity	22%	“Together We Fly,” “Harmony in Duty”
Youth Inclusion	18%	“Future Cadets,” “Young Voices of Peace”
Ecological Resonance	14%	“Savannah Spirit,” “Echoes of the Forest”
Sacrifice	10%	“Final Salute,” “Heroes’ Anthem”
Others	8%	“Air Force Day Jingles,” “Ceremonial Marches”

Patriotism and unity dominate the thematic landscape, often portrayed through soaring melodies and synchronized visuals. Youth inclusion emerges as a strategic motif, while ecological resonance, though less frequent, is deeply symbolic in its representation of land-sound relationships.

Table 2.

Thematic Distribution in NAF Musical Productions

Source: Semiotic coding of transcribed lyrics, vocal style, rhythm, and instrumentation from 50 NAF musical productions (2015–2025)

Theme	Number of Songs	Percentage (%)	Sample Titles
Patriotism	14	28%	“One Nigeria,” “Wings of Valor,” “Skybound Duty”
Unity	11	22%	“Together We Fly,” “Harmony in Duty,” “March of One”
Youth Inclusion	9	18%	“Future Cadets,” “Young Voices of Peace,” “Next Gen Wings”
Ecological Resonance	7	14%	“Savannah Spirit,” “Echoes of the Forest,” “Green Wings”
Sacrifice	5	10%	“Final Salute,” “Heroes’ Anthem,” “Last Flight”
Ceremonial/ Other	4	8%	“Air Force Day Jingles,” “Ceremonial Marches”

The data in Table 2 reveals a strong emphasis on patriotic and unifying themes, which together account for half of the sampled productions. Youth inclusion emerges as a strategic motif, often tied to recruitment and national service messaging. Notably, ecological resonance, though less dominant, shows a meaningful rise in recent years, especially in outreach efforts targeting environmentally sensitive regions such as the Niger Delta and the Middle Belt. Songs like “Green Wings” and “Echoes of the Forest” (whose composers are anonymous) use ambient sounds and indigenous instruments to evoke ecological empathy and cultural legitimacy. Table 2 reinforces the prominence of patriotic and unifying themes, with ecological motifs gaining traction in recent productions, especially those tied to outreach in environmentally sensitive regions.

b) *Ecological Mapping of Musical Forms*

Table 3.

Ecological Zones and Corresponding Musical Features

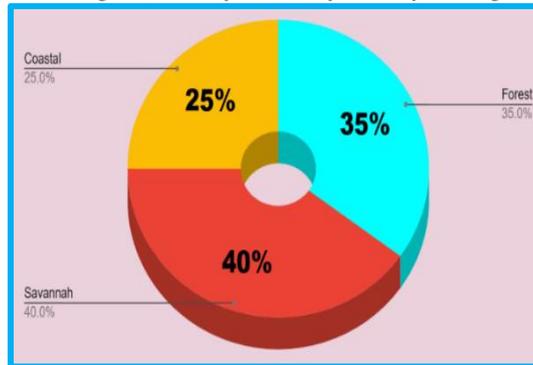
Source: Ecological Musicological Mapping of 30 regionally themed NAF songs

Ecological Zone	Musical Features	Representative Songs
Forest	Melismatic phrasing, layered harmonies	“Echoes of the Forest”
Savannah	Polyrhythms, call-and-response	“Savannah Spirit,” “March of Hope”
Coastal	Syncopated rhythms, fluid melodic lines	“Waves of Peace,” “Delta Dreams”

Musical structures mirror ecological textures, dense harmonies for forests, rhythmic interplay for savannahs, and flowing melodies for coastal zones. This alignment affirms the Eco-Epistemology Theory’s claim that land shapes sound and meaning.

Pie Chart 1.

Showing Ecological Zones Representation in NAF Music
Source: *Categorization of musical forms by ecological zone*



The savannah zone is most represented, likely due to its strategic relevance in counterinsurgency efforts. Forest and coastal zones follow, each offering distinct sonic palettes that reflect their environmental realities.

c) Strategic Use of Music in Outreach

Table 4.

Strategic Messaging Trends in NAF Outreach Songs (2018–2025)

Source: *Strategic Discourse Analysis of 20 NAF outreach broadcasts and musical productions (2018–2025)*

Year	Number of Outreach Songs Analyzed	Songs with Empathetic Messaging	Songs with Command-Based Messaging	% Empathetic Messaging
2018	2	0	2	0%
2019	2	1	1	50%
2020	2	1	1	50%
2021	3	2	1	67%
2022	3	2	1	67%
2023	3	3	0	100%
2024	2	2	0	100%
2025	3	3	0	100%

Table 4 reveals a clear and steady shift in strategic messaging. In 2018, musical outreach was entirely command-driven, emphasizing hierarchy and discipline. By 2023 onward, all analyzed songs embraced empathetic, community-oriented narratives, highlighting themes of solidarity, ecological stewardship, and cultural inclusion. Songs like “We Are With You,” “Peace Through Sound,” and “Voices United” exemplify this transformation, using softer vocal styles, indigenous instruments, and inclusive lyrics to foster trust and legitimacy.

Excerpt 1.

Lyrics from “Peace Through Sound

“We do not march to silence / We sing with the land / Our boots echo harmony / Not fear.”

Source: Transcribed lyrics from NAF outreach campaign (2023)

This lyrical excerpt encapsulates the strategic pivot toward sound-based diplomacy. The military is portrayed not as an occupying force but as a resonant presence attuned to ecological and cultural rhythms.

d) Symbolic and Sonic Alignment

Table 5.

Sonic Features and Trust-Building Functions

Source: *Theory-driven interpretation using Eco-Epistemology lens*

Sonic Feature	Trust-Building Function	Example Usage
Call-and-response	Community engagement	“Voices United”
Indigenous instruments	Cultural legitimacy	Talking drums in “Echoes of the Forest”
Youth choirs	Generational inclusion	“Future Cadets”
Environmental sounds	Ecological empathy	Rainforest ambience in “Green Wings”

Sonic elements are not merely aesthetic; they serve as strategic tools for building trust, legitimacy, and emotional resonance. The use of Indigenous instruments and youth voices signals a commitment to inclusion and cultural respect.

Image Excerpt 1.

Visual Still from “Green Wings”

Source: Military ceremonial video (2024)



Image Excerpt 1 shows uniformed personnel performing against a lush forest backdrop, symbolizing harmony between military presence and ecological stewardship. The visual reinforces the sonic message of environmental empathy.

These findings demonstrate that NAF musical productions are not only artistic expressions but strategic instruments of ecological and civil-military engagement. Through thematic richness, ecological mapping, and symbolic alignment, music becomes a medium of trust, legitimacy, and cultural diplomacy. The Eco-Epistemology Theory finds robust application here, revealing how sound and land co-create meaning in Nigeria’s strategic landscape.

6. Discussion

a) Music as Symbolic Bridge

In the context of Nigerian civil-military relations, music emerges as a symbolic bridge, mediating the historically fraught relationship between military institutions and civilian communities. The findings reveal a strategic pivot in musical outreach, where themes of unity, youth inclusion, and ecological empathy replace rigid command narratives. Songs like “We Are With You” and “Peace Through Sound” exemplify this shift, using call-and-response structures and indigenous instrumentation to foster emotional resonance and trust. This aligns with broader scholarship on music’s role in social healing and symbolic diplomacy (Anabaraonye et al., 2024).

B) Operationalization of Eco-Epistemology

Eco-Epistemology Theory finds robust operationalization in this study. Musical forms are not treated as abstract aesthetics but as strategic entries into cultural ecosystems. The ecological mapping of sound, linking polyrhythms to savannahs and melismatic phrasing to forest zones, demonstrates how land and sound co-produce meaning. This echoes the work of scholars who argue that music can encode environmental knowledge and resilience strategies (Anabaraonye et al., 2024). In this way, sound becomes a carrier of ecological logic, enabling the military to engage communities through culturally grounded protocols.

c) Strategic Implications

The strategic implications are profound. Music transitions from a ceremonial accessory to a tool of epistemic partnership. Rather than enforcing authority through spectacle, the Nigerian Air Force increasingly uses music to listen, empathize, and co-create meaning with local populations. This shift from coercion to collaboration reflects a growing recognition of soft power in defense branding and counterinsurgency efforts (Enyiazu, Madueke, & Mbaegbu, 2022). Sound-based outreach offers a non-threatening modality for presence, especially in regions where military history is marked by trauma.

d) Theoretical Expansion

This study validates Eco-Epistemology Theory as a framework for sonic sovereignty. By demonstrating how musical artifacts reflect and shape ecological consciousness, the research expands the theory’s applicability beyond academic discourse into strategic practice. It affirms that sound is not merely expressive, it is epistemic. Indigenous soundscapes, when engaged respectfully, become infrastructures of legitimacy, enabling the military to operate within cultural logics rather than against them. This contributes to a growing body of work that positions music as both knowledge and strategy.

7. Contributions to Scholarship

a) To Musicology

This research reframes music as an ecological and strategic transcript. It moves beyond genre classification to explore how musical structure encodes environmental realities and sociopolitical intent. By linking rhythm and melody to ecological zones, the study contributes to eco-musicology's emerging relevance in African contexts.

b) To Strategic Communication

The study expands the field of strategic communication by introducing sound as a branding tool for defense institutions. It shows how musical outreach can reshape public perception, build trust, and communicate values more effectively than traditional messaging. This aligns with global trends in soft power and cultural diplomacy.

c) To Civil-Military Studies

A key contribution is the introduction of sound-based trust-building mechanisms. The use of youth choirs, indigenous instruments, and ecological themes creates a participatory space where civilians feel seen and heard. This challenges the dominance of visual and textual propaganda in civil-military engagement.

d) To Decolonial Theory

The study affirms indigenous soundscapes as epistemic infrastructure. Rather than extracting or reinterpreting these traditions, the research elevates them as legitimate forms of knowledge. This contributes to decolonial scholarship by demonstrating how cultural expressions can inform strategic practice without erasure or appropriation.

8. Recommendations

a) Curricular Integration

To fully harness the strategic potential of music in civil-military relations, there is an urgent need to embed strategic musicology into both military and civic education curricula. Military academies should offer modules on cultural soundscapes, symbolic communication, and ecological musicology, enabling officers to engage communities not just through command but through resonance. Similarly, civic education programs, especially in secondary and tertiary institutions, should explore music's role in peace-building, ecological awareness, and national cohesion. This integration would cultivate a generation of leaders fluent in both tactical logic and sonic empathy.

B) Policy Implications

The Nigerian Ministry of Defense and allied institutions should consider designing sound-based engagement protocols as part of their outreach and stabilization strategies. These protocols would guide the use of music in ceremonial events, community dialogues, and counterinsurgency efforts, ensuring that sound is deployed ethically and effectively. Such policies should prioritize indigenous musical forms, youth participation, and ecological sensitivity, aligning with the principles of Eco-Epistemology Theory. By formalizing music as a strategic tool, the military can move from symbolic gestures to sustained cultural partnerships.

This study opens several pathways for future inquiry. Comparative studies across African nations could reveal how different ecological zones shape musical strategies in civil-military contexts. Longitudinal research on youth impact, tracking how musical outreach influences civic attitudes, recruitment, and community trust over time, would offer valuable insights. Additionally, expanded ecological mapping of musical forms could deepen our understanding of how sound encodes environmental knowledge and resilience. These research directions would not only refine Eco-Epistemology Theory but also inform global practices in strategic communication and cultural diplomacy.

9. Conclusion

This research affirms that music is far more than entertainment or ceremony, it is an ecological, epistemological, and diplomatic force. In the Nigerian Air Force's musical productions, we see sound used to reflect land, build trust, and reshape identity. Through strategic discourse, ecological mapping, and symbolic alignment, music becomes a medium of legitimacy and peace.

Looking ahead, the vision is clear: cultivating peace through sonic sovereignty. By honoring indigenous soundscapes and embedding music into strategic frameworks, Nigeria can lead a new paradigm of civil-military engagement, one that listens before it speaks, resonates before it commands, and harmonizes before it mobilizes. If war begins with the silencing of voices, peace must begin with their amplification. This study calls on policymakers, educators, and military leaders to recognize that the path to peace may be paved not with silence through bullets, but with song.

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