

MORAL & SPIRITUAL TERRAIN OF CUBA

Analytical Assessment

SUBJECT	Morality and Spiritual Warfare in Cuba
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This document presents factual intelligence on Cuba's moral and spiritual landscape. It does not prescribe decisions, courses of action, or conclusions. All analysis is provided for independent decision-maker assessment.

SOURCES & METHODS

METHODOLOGY: This assessment is built exclusively from open-source materials — U.S. and international government reporting, peer-reviewed academic literature, NGO monitoring reports, primary archaeological documentation, independent Cuban journalism, and statistical aggregators. No field interviews on the island were conducted by UnseenFront for this version. Source materials are predominantly in English, with Spanish-language sources (CubaSiglo21, CiberCuba, Havana Times) consulted directly. Date coverage is principally 2018–2025, with historical and archaeological sources covering periods up to 4000 BCE.

KNOWN RELIABILITY GAPS: (1) Religious composition figures are estimates because the Cuban state does not collect or release reliable religious-affiliation data and "double belonging" makes self-identification analytically unreliable. (2) Crime and corruption figures rely on independent monitors (OCAC, OC Index, CubaSiglo21) because Cuban state crime statistics are widely understood to be incomplete. (3) Internal Abakuá, Palo Monte, and household-level Espiritismo dynamics are systematically under-documented — these are flagged as intelligence gaps in §08. (4) "State infiltration of religious leadership" is documented in aggregate by USCIRF and CSW but rarely attributable at the individual level in open sources.

CONFIDENCE FRAMEWORK: Major findings throughout this assessment carry confidence ratings: **HIGH** = corroborated by three or more independent authoritative sources; **MEDIUM** = corroborated by two sources or a single authoritative source with strong methodology; **LOW** = single source or analytically inferred. The absence of a label indicates HIGH confidence by default.

ACRONYMS & KEY TERMS

ARUMC — Arkansas United Methodist Church

CCP — Cuban Communist Party

CEDA — Center for Democracy in the Americas

CLALS — Center for Latin American & Latino Studies (American University)

CSW — Christian Solidarity Worldwide

IRF — International Religious Freedom (U.S. State Department annual report)

NMAI — Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

OAA — Outreach Aid to the Americas

OCAC — Cuban Observatory of Citizen Audit (Spanish: Observatorio Cubano de Auditoría Ciudadana)

OC Index — Global Organized Crime Index (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime)

ORA — Office of Religious Affairs (Cuban Communist Party Central Committee)

USCIRF — U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom

Abakuá — Afro-Cuban male initiatory fraternity rooted in Cross River (Calabar) Ekpe traditions

Botánica — Storefront supplying ritual goods for Santería, Palo Monte, and Espiritismo practice

Cohoba — Pre-Columbian Taíno hallucinogenic snuff ritual used to communicate with zemís

Doble moral — "Double morality" — the public/private split Cubans maintain under surveillance

Encomienda — Spanish colonial labor grant tying indigenous peoples to Spanish settlers in exchange for nominal religious instruction

Espiritismo — Spirit-mediumship tradition pervasive in Cuban households across denominational lines

Orisha — Yoruba-derived deity within Santería / Regla de Ocha

Palo Monte — Congo-derived Cuban religion centered on spirits of the dead and nature elements

Regla de Ocha (Santería) — Yoruba-Catholic syncretic religion formed in Cuba under colonial pressure

Requerimiento — 1513 Spanish legal document read aloud to indigenous peoples authorizing conquest if Christ and the king were not formally accepted

Special Period — Cuban economic crisis after the 1991 Soviet collapse

Zemí — Carved Taíno effigy housing personal or lineage deities

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ASSESSMENT BASELINE: Cuba is not best understood as a political problem, an economic problem, or a religious problem in isolation. It is the product of five centuries of layered trauma: indigenous dispossession, plantation slavery, colonial Catholicism, republican corruption, revolutionary re-engineering of conscience, and a post-Soviet survival economy. Each layer has altered the moral imagination of the population and produced identifiable spiritual, social, and institutional conditions legible to decision-makers across domains.

OPERATING CONDITION: Cuba remains a one-party state under the Cuban Communist Party. All religious life is administered through state registration and surveillance mechanisms. Freedom House [1], the U.S. State Department 2023 IRF Report [2], USCIRF [3, 4], and Open Doors [5] all classify Cuba's religious freedom environment as extremely poor, with documented surveillance, arbitrary detention, fines, and suppression of unregistered religious communities. **CONFIDENCE: HIGH**

MORAL CONDITION: The dominant moral framework on the island has collapsed from principled ethical reasoning to survival logic: 'If my family eats and no one dies, it is acceptable.' This is not a uniform moral depravity; it is a rational adaptation to six decades of scarcity, surveillance, and institutional dishonesty. Understanding the difference is analytically essential. **CONFIDENCE: MEDIUM**

SPIRITUAL CONDITION: Cuba is a heavily syncretized spiritual environment. Catholicism (nominally ~60% of population), Protestant and Evangelical communities (~5%), and Afro-Cuban religious systems (Santería/Regla de Ocha, Palo Monte, Espiritismo, Abakuá) coexist in overlapping, layered practice. 'Double belonging' is the rule and not the exception. Clean denominational categories are analytically misleading. **CONFIDENCE: HIGH**

KEY FINDING: The evidence does not support a conclusion that Cuba is spiritually or morally abandoned. It supports the conclusion that Cuba is heavily bound by blood covenants of conquest, by occult inheritance, by ideological fear structures, and by survival economics yet retains identifiable reserves of moral capital, faithful remnants, and documented revival movements. Decision-makers should weight both realities. **CONFIDENCE: MEDIUM**

02 HISTORICAL MORAL STRATIGRAPHY

Cuba's present moral and spiritual condition cannot be assessed without reading the historical record as accumulated sediment. Each era deposited distinct moral logics, spiritual covenants, and wound patterns that remain operative in the present. The following layers are presented chronologically and analytically.

PRE-COLONIAL (pre-1492) | Indigenous Ground Condition

The island was continuously inhabited for roughly 4,000 to 5,500 years before the Arawak/Taíno arrived. The first settlers — Guanahatabey and Ciboney peoples — came from the Yucatán and/or northern South America between approximately 4000 and 3000 BCE. Archaeological evidence shows they maintained a cave-based cult of the dead: at Punta del Este on the Isle of Youth, Cave #1 holds 213 pictographs including a concentric-circle central motif with an east-pointing arrow, and human bones dyed red with hematite from secondary burials dated 1,000–2,000 years old. Ambrosio Cave on the Hicacos Peninsula contains over 70 red-and-black geometric and mythological figures, up to 2,000 years old, in a space archaeologists identify as a ceremonial site. The Guanahacabibes Peninsula in Pinar del Río holds the oldest continuous pre-ceramic occupation in Cuba — likely the point of first human arrival on the island. Red ochre, shell-and-flint ritual assemblages, and extended burials complete a classic Caribbean shamanic complex that was already in place millennia before the Taíno arrived. [6, 7, 8]

The Taíno did not come to empty ground. Arriving from the Orinoco basin via the Lesser Antilles around 500–800 CE, they brought an entire cultic import package: the zemí cult (carved stone, wood, and bone effigies housing personal or lineage deities), the cohoba ritual (hallucinogenic snuff inhaled through carved trays to induce trance and communicate with the zemís), the Atabey/Yúcahu pantheon, areyto ceremonial dance-chant complexes, and batey ball courts and ceremonial plazas. Critically, the Taíno did not displace the Guanahatabey — who were still present in western Cuba at European contact, twelve centuries after the Taíno's arrival — nor did they close or repurpose the older cave sites. Guanahatabey cave sites and Taíno ceremonial plazas coexisted, with neither evicting the other. [6, 8]

This means the "every layer adds, no layer subtracts" pattern that repeats at every subsequent hinge in Cuban history was already the island's operating behavior before 1492. The Taíno convergence onto the archaic substrate is the first documented instance of a compatible spiritual payload arriving on ground already claimed — the same structural move that Catholic Spain would later make onto the Taíno substrate, and that Yoruba/Kongo/Abakuá systems would later make onto the Catholic-Taíno substrate, and so on. No power that has ever landed on Cuba has formally addressed what was here first.

The single most striking surviving pre-contact artifact is the Gran Cemí de Patana — a 1.20-meter Taíno idol representing the rain deity Boinayel, carved into a stalagmite in a cave near Maisí in eastern Cuba's Guantánamo Province (locally known as Cueva del Agua or Cueva de la Patana), surrounded by petroglyphs. Documented as a living sanctuary by American archaeologist Mark Raymond Harrington during a 1915 expedition, Harrington removed the idol by sawing it into five pieces with a two-man lumberjack saw, transporting it by mule to Maisí, by boat to Baracoa, and then aboard a Norwegian cargo ship to New York. The idol subsequently entered the George Gustav Heye collection and is now held in the reserves of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Maryland. The base of the stalagmite and surrounding petroglyphs remain in situ in the cave. There is no record of any public Christian dispossession of this site at any point in its history. The primary cultic object was not destroyed or renounced — it was extracted to the United States, leaving the site itself unrelinquished. [7]

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *The island was not a moral blank slate prior to Spain — and the blank-slate problem is not a Columbian problem. It is a 4,000-year problem. The deepest, least-renounced spiritual ground on the island predates Taíno, Spanish Catholicism, African*

syncretism, and Marxism by millennia. The cave sites of Punta del Este, Ambrosio, and Guanahacabibes represent the oldest, deepest layer of unchallenged claim on the island. No subsequent tradition — not Spain, not the African syncretic systems, not the revolutionary state, not the Church — has formally addressed what was established here first. For those operating in the spiritual-warfare domain, this is the floor of the stratigraphy.

CONQUEST & COLONIAL RULE (1492 – 1700s) | Covenant of Domination in Christ's Name

- The encomienda system institutionalized forced labor in exchange for nominal religious instruction.
- Mass killing of indigenous peoples, systematic rape, land dispossession, and destruction of sacred sites.
- The *Requerimiento* — a legal document read aloud to justify enslavement — authorized conquest if Christ and the king were not formally accepted.

The spiritual formation that arrived in Cuba was not a neutral Christianity. It was the Christianity of 781 years of holy war, forced conversion, Inquisition, and mass expulsion — institutionalized, legally codified, and staffed by personnel fresh from Granada. Three events from the same year, the same monarchs, and the same military camp at Santa Fe crystallize this: the Fall of Granada (January 2, 1492), which ended the Reconquista; the Alhambra Decree (March 31, 1492), expelling roughly 200,000 Jews from Castile and Aragon; and the Capitulations of Santa Fe (April 17, 1492), authorizing Columbus's westward voyage — with Columbus making landfall in Cuba on October 28, 1492. These are not three separate stories. They are one event: the completion of a crusading program, the expulsion of the last internal Other, and the launch of a new external one — in a single court, a single season, a single spiritual formation. [9, 10, 11, 12]

The emblem of this layer is the execution of Taíno cacique Hatuey at Yara near Bayamo on February 2, 1512. Before being burned alive, Hatuey was offered baptism by a Franciscan friar so his soul might go to heaven; he asked whether Christians went there, and when told yes, refused baptism, preferring hell to sharing heaven with them. That exchange encodes the conquest's spiritual catastrophe in a single scene: the gospel arrived on the island inseparable from torture and conquest, and its first named indigenous respondent publicly declared it unrecognizable from its carriers. [13, 14]

Notably, Spanish Catholicism in Cuba almost never publicly destroyed prior sacred geography, unlike the destruction of idols in central Mexico after 1521. The Gran Cemí of Patana still exists in its cave. The pattern was absorption and overlay, not displacement — which is analytically significant for understanding all subsequent layers. [7]

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *This period establishes a "false Christian covering" pattern — power consolidated under religious authority while generating bloodshed and injustice. Three analytical models bear on how this operated: (1) The attractor/gravitational model — where spiritual ground has been claimed long enough, it develops pull, and the existing pre-Columbian field did not repel Spain's arriving spiritual formation but recognized in it a compatible form of power; (2) The displacement/eviction model (Matthew 12:43–45) — 1492 is a year of mass eviction: Islamic Iberia broken at Granada, Jewish communities expelled, the crusading formation suddenly without internal Others and sailing westward; (3) The coalition/alliance model — over five centuries Cuba accumulates a stack of spiritual tenancies that coexist without displacing each other, each layer absorbing rather than evicting prior claims. These models are not mutually exclusive. The 1492 convergence is a hinge, not a starting point.*

SLAVERY & AFRO-CUBAN RELIGION (1700s – 1800s) | Dual Bondage — Oppressor and Oppressed

- Cuba became a full plantation slave society following late-18th-century sugar expansion.
- Enslaved Yoruba, Bantu, and related African peoples developed parallel spiritual systems under colonial Catholic pressure. [15, 16]
- Santería/Regla de Ocha formed by merging Yoruba orishas with Catholic saints — a survival syncretism, not a theology of assent. [15, 16, 17]

- Palo Monte (Congo-rooted), Espiritismo (spirit mediumship), and Abakuá (male initiatory fraternity) emerged from the same crucible. [16, 6, 18]

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *Two distinct spiritual entanglements emerged: (1) the oppressor class corrupted by false Christianity over greed; (2) the enslaved class bound by non-biblical covenants made for survival and protection. Both remain operational. The coalition pattern identified above is visible here: each new arriving system merged with what was already present rather than displacing it, further deepening the multi-layered hold on the island's spiritual geography.*

THE REPUBLIC (1902 – 1958) | Habituated Corruption Without Moral Golden Age

- Independence reproduced corruption — the botella (no-show salary), patronage, lottery culture, gambling, and prostitution. [19]
- A respectable Catholic public surface sat over entrenched vice economies and clientelism.
- The working moral ethic normalized: success = system manipulation; truth = whatever you must say to get by; morality = negotiable with state or patron approval.

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *There was no moral restoration between conquest and revolution. The republic embedded corruption as a structural habit, not an exception.*

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM (1959 – 1992) | State as Sole Moral Arbiter — Ideological Idolatry

- Cuba was officially atheist from 1959 to 1992. Religious schools were nationalized; independent institutions were weakened. [20, 21]
- The Party became the moral referee began and continued defining good and evil in terms of loyalty vs. counter-revolution.
- Surveillance, informant networks, and reprisals for truth-telling produced a culture of double-speech. [2, 3]
- The operative moral question shifted from "What does God say?" to "What does the Party tolerate?"

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *This era installed a spiritual stronghold of fear, lies, and ideological idolatry with direct impact on church governance, family communication, and civic trust.*

POST-SOVIET COLLAPSE TO PRESENT (1992 – 2026) | Survival as Moral Framework

- The 1990s Special Period and the current crisis normalized black markets, workplace theft, informal reselling, and constant rule-bending. [19]
- Mass outmigration since 2021 has drained families, churches, and communities. [19, 22, 23]
- Rising crime, institutional decay, food and medicine shortages, and rolling blackouts all create conditions where survival displaces virtue.
- Cuba scores poorly on Transparency International corruption indices; the OC Index (2023) documents organized crime penetration. [24, 25]

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *Survival ethics are not ideological depravity — they are rational adaptations. Decision-makers who cannot distinguish coerced compromise from moral collapse will misread the population.*

03 PRESENT SPIRITUAL ECOSYSTEM

Accurate religious composition data for Cuba is difficult to obtain due to overlapping practice, state registration requirements, and political pressure on self-identification. The following reflects the most reliable available sourcing from the U.S. State Department 2023 IRF [2], USCIRF [3, 4], Pew Research [26], Statista [27], Outreach Aid to the Americas [28], and academic field research [15, 16, 6, 29].

Religious Landscape at a Glance

TRADITION	ESTIMATED PRESENCE	OPERATIONAL NOTES
Roman Catholicism	~60% nominal identification	Enormous symbolic weight; morally mixed history — imperial partner, cultural anchor, constrained public voice. State surveillance of clergy is documented.
Protestant / Evangelical	~5%; growing via house churches	Concentrated in informal networks; documented arrests, fines, blocked construction, and surveillance of pastors who criticize the regime or organize beyond approved limits.
Santería / Regla de Ocha	Widespread; exact figures unavailable due to dual-belonging	Yoruba-derived orisha system merged with Catholic saints under colonial pressure. Functions as a lived social system — family lineage, healing, identity, ritual obligation.
Palo Monte	Present, primarily Afro-Cuban communities	Congo-rooted; centers on spirits of the dead, nature elements, and spiritually charged objects. Used for practical spiritual problem-solving.
Espiritismo	Pervasive at household level	Spirit mediumship for communication with the dead; healing, protection, discernment. Often coexists with Catholic or Protestant practice.
Abakuá	Havana and Matanzas; male initiatory fraternity	Ritual secrecy, sacred drumming, social protection. Rarely accessible to outsiders. Relevant for understanding masculine social imagination and oath structures.

State Control of Religious Life

All religious groups must register with the Ministry of Justice. Membership in or association with an unregistered group is criminalized. Even registered groups require state permission for activities beyond regular services such as publications, foreign contacts, literature imports, vehicle use, building activity, and meetings outside designated premises. [2, 3, 28, 30]

Field-critical implication: Many religious actors operate under ongoing pressure and active surveillance. Interview subjects may self-censor, use coded language, or decline depth until trust is established. Foreign contact itself can generate state suspicion. Consent, anonymity, and careful information handling are both ethical and operational necessities.

ANALYTICAL NOTE: "Double belonging" is normal in Cuba and self-identification as Catholic or Christian does not indicate exclusive theological commitment. Layered belonging, practical syncretism, family ritual inheritance, and selective participation are the rule rather than the exception. Clean denominational categories are analytically unreliable.

04 CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL & MORAL FLASHPOINTS

4.1 Youth Culture and Emigration

Mass outmigration since 2021 is the single most destabilizing force reshaping Cuban society. Young Cubans disproportionately choose to leave, fracturing families, depleting churches, and draining professional capacity. Those who remain face chronic shortages, rolling blackouts, filtered internet access, and an attraction to whatever promises agency — occult practice, digital hustle, or political activism. [19, 22, 23]

DEMOGRAPHIC BASELINE: Cuba's resident population in 2026 is estimated at approximately 11.0 million, down from a 2017 peak of 11.4 million [31]. Approximately 18% of the population is over age 65 — the oldest age structure in Latin America — while the under-30 cohort has been disproportionately depleted by emigration. From January 2022 through mid-2024, over one million Cubans departed the island for the United States and Mexico — the largest migration wave in Cuban history, exceeding the combined totals of the 1980 Mariel boatlift, the 1965 Camarioca exodus, and the 1994 rafter crisis [23]. This represents an approximately 9% population loss in under three years, concentrated among working-age adults. The moral and spiritual consequences described in §04.3 should be read against this scale.

CONFIDENCE: HIGH

4.2 Survival Ethics and Normalized Corruption

The economic crisis of inflation, food and medicine shortages, institutional collapse, has normalized black markets, theft from workplaces, informal reselling, and strategic rule-bending. Cuba scores poorly on international corruption indices [25]. The Global Organized Crime Index 2023 documents organized crime penetration [24]. Decision-makers should note:

- Moral gray zones are universal as doctors, teachers, and pastors are forced into informal economies to survive.
- Cynicism toward all institutions (party, church, foreigners) coexists with a defensive hospitality.
- Not every rule-breaking act carries identical moral weight; many informal practices are responses to scarcity, not ideological choices.

4.3 Family Fragmentation

Separation of generations through emigration reshapes marriage, parenting, elderly care, discipleship, neighborhood accountability, and hope. Leaving can signify despair, ambition, sacrifice, or betrayal and families simultaneously hold all these interpretations. The "missing chair at the table" is among the most emotionally and spiritually charged realities on the island. [19, 22, 23]

4.4 Abortion and Life Ethics

Abortion has been legal since the 1960s and is normalized within the Cuban public health system. Cuba carries one of the highest abortion rates in the Western Hemisphere. Engagement on this issue requires understanding the overlap between ethical position, scarcity, housing constraints, migration pressure, and women's survival burden. The current crisis intensifies practical desperation and as a result the moral and the material are inseparable. [19, 32]

4.5 Truth, Fear, and Double-Speech

A recurring finding across state reporting and field testimony is the moral consequence of prolonged surveillance is self-censorship, coded speech, distrust, rumor, and fractured solidarity. Where truth is dangerous, silence becomes a survival tool. Over time, this deforms not only politics but pastoral life, family communication, and personal integrity. [2, 3, 30]

- Public transcript: what is said to authorities, employers, and neighbors.
- Private transcript: what is said in trusted conversation.
- Decision-makers who only access the public transcript will misread the population entirely.

The deeper analytical question is whether the *doble moral* (the double life Cubans have practiced under surveillance across generations) has crossed from a political adaptation into a spiritual formation: a condition in which truth-telling itself feels structurally dangerous, and in which the self that speaks publicly and the self that believes privately are so separated that integrity becomes difficult even within families and churches, independent of any external threat. A population that has practiced chronic duplicity at civilizational scale, across multiple generations, does not simply return to integrated truthfulness when the external pressure lifts. The habit becomes the person. This has direct implications for discipleship, pastoral trust, and any engagement strategy that assumes a change in political conditions will automatically produce moral restoration.

4.6 Crime and Public Insecurity

Independent monitoring [24, 33, 34, 35] shows a sharp rise in robberies, assaults, and homicides in 2023–2024, rooted in institutional breakdown and a culture of impunity. This is not merely a law enforcement problem; it reflects the collapse of moral accountability structures that normally moderate behavior such as family authority, religious community, and civic trust.

05 SPIRITUAL STRONGHOLDS & ACTIVE BATTLEFIELDS

The following domains are assessed as the primary arenas of spiritual contest on the island, each with identifiable historical roots, current expressions, and intelligence relevance.

DOMAIN: TRUTH & SPEECH

Stronghold: Fear, censorship, and institutionalized double-speech.

Historical Root: Colonial legalism → socialist surveillance → informant culture.

Current Expression: Pastors deciding whether to speak prophetically or remain safe; believers navigating truth in workplaces and families; church communities resisting the lie that national loyalty equals silence. The structural system rewards betrayal and punishes integrity.

Primary Sources: [2, 3]

DOMAIN: ALLEGIANCE

Stronghold: Divided loyalty — "Jesus plus the orishas."

Historical Root: Slavery-era syncretism; state tolerance of Santería as a counterweight to Catholic influence.

Current Expression: Many Cubans see no theological contradiction in attending Mass or a Protestant service and visiting a santero for healing or protection. This is less apostasy to them and more of risk management. The functional question is not theological but practical: where does actual trust reside?

Coalition Pattern Note: The "Jesus plus the orishas" condition is not simply personal compromise — it reflects the five-century coalition pattern identified in §02, in which arriving spiritual systems have consistently merged with what was already present rather than displacing it. This means that when a believer attempts to break clean — rejecting the whole stack, not just one element — the resistance tends to be sharp and multi-vectored, not from a single direction. Engagement strategies that address only the most visible layer (orisha practice) without understanding the deeper stack will leave root structures intact.

Primary Sources: [3, 15, 16, 18, 29]

DOMAIN: LIFE & HOPE

Stronghold: Normalized abortion, despair, suicide, and emigration as exit.

Historical Root: Liberal abortion regime; ongoing crisis; disrupted family structures.

Current Expression: Cuba has carried one of the highest abortion rates in the Western Hemisphere since legalization in the 1960s. Critically, Cuba's suicide rate has been unusually and persistently elevated across every political regime the island has lived under — colonial, republican, and revolutionary. Historian Louis A. Pérez Jr. documents this in detail in *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society* (University of North Carolina Press), demonstrating that elevated self-destruction is not a crisis-specific response but a persistent condition that has outlasted every political transformation. This gives it a different diagnostic weight than ordinary despair driven by current scarcity or blackouts. It points to something structural, not situational — a spirit of death that is older than the revolution and has not been addressed by any change in political order. Current crisis conditions — hunger, medicine shortages, emigration — magnify an existing condition rather than creating a new one.

Primary Sources: [19, 36, 37, 38, 22]

DOMAIN: CORRUPTION vs. INTEGRITY

Stronghold: Survival compromise normalized at all institutional levels.

Historical Root: Colonial botella and vice economy → black-market survival → petty theft and bribery as necessity.

Current Expression: Even actors who understand moral integrity are structurally pressured into compromise. Identifying individuals or communities who maintain costly integrity inside compromised systems is a key intelligence objective for multiple actor types.

Primary Sources: [37, 38, 33, 34, 25]

DOMAIN: THE CHURCH ITSELF

Stronghold: Fear, compromise, and division within the Body of Christ.

Historical Root: Imperial complicity → accommodation to revolutionary regime → ongoing state penetration.

Current Expression: Some churches are bold; others have become cautious, politicized, or inward-looking to avoid state conflict. Tensions exist between registered and unregistered communities, between denominations, and between older and younger leaders. State infiltration of religious leadership is documented.

Primary Sources: [2, 3, 30]

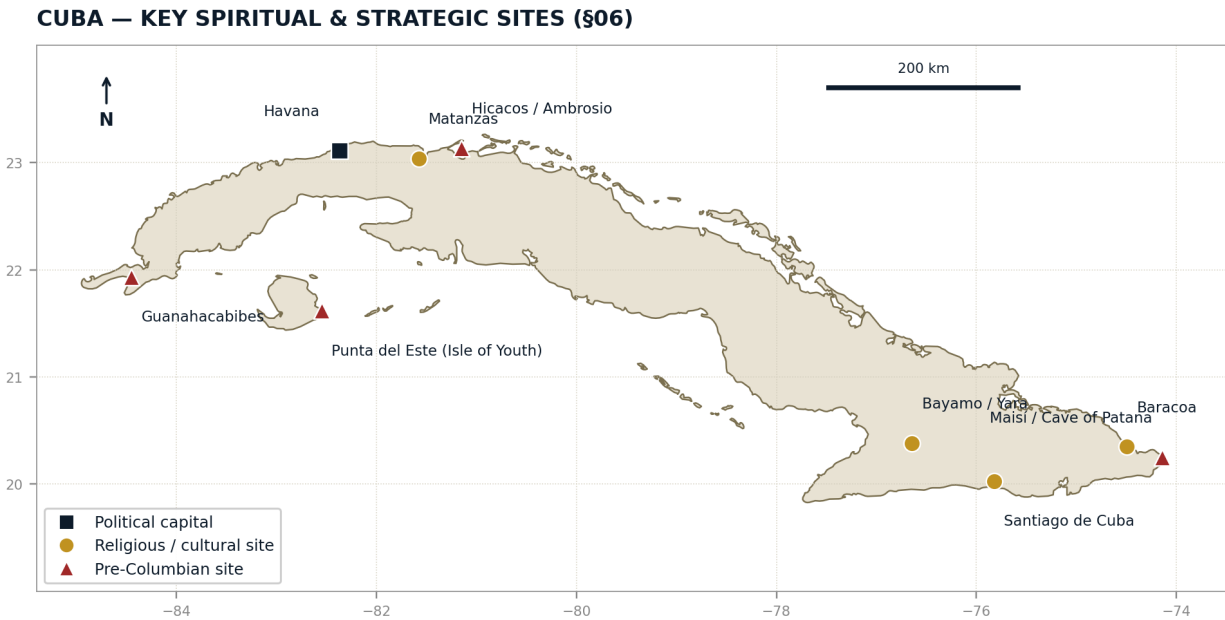
Stronghold Summary Matrix

DOMAIN	HISTORICAL ROOT	CURRENT EXPRESSION	KEY INDICATOR
Truth & Speech	Colonial legalism; socialist surveillance	Double-speech, informant culture, self-censorship	Coded language; hesitation; what is NOT said
Allegiance	Slavery-era syncretism; pre-colonial coalition pattern	"Jesus plus the orishas"; botánicas; household rites	Dual ritual objects; mixed sacred spaces; multi-vectored resistance when allegiance is challenged
Life & Hope	Liberal abortion regime; historically persistent suicide rate; migration; scarcity	Normalized abortion, despair, suicide, exodus	Demographic collapse; youth absence from churches; pattern predates current crisis
Corruption	Republican vice economy	Black markets, bribes, theft as survival	Institutional cynicism; moral rationalization
The Church	Imperial complicity; regime accommodation	Fear, rivalry, silence, syncretism in leadership	Registered vs. unregistered tension; state-facing posture

06 SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY: GATES & CENTERS

The following locations carry concentrated spiritual, historical, and social significance. Each represents a convergence of political, religious, cultural, or occult power.

FIGURE 1. Spatial reference for the locations cataloged in §06. Stylized and not to scale; site coordinates are approximate. Pre-Columbian sites are marked with triangles, religious / cultural sites with circles, the political capital with a square.



HAVANA — Political & Spiritual Capital

Seat of political power; significant Abakuá presence; layered colonial sacred geography; site of ongoing Catholic-state negotiation. Surveillance density is highest. Foreign presence is most monitored.

MATANZAS — Afro-Cuban Religious Heartland

Historically the center of Yoruba-derived religious practice in Cuba. Highest concentration of Santería practitioners and lineage houses. Key node for understanding orisha covenant structures.

SANTIAGO DE CUBA — Revolutionary & Sacred Intersection

Home of El Cobre — shrine to Our Lady of Charity (Cuba's patron saint), one of the most powerful Catholic devotional sites on the island. Also carries Afro-Cuban and revolutionary historical layers. Significant pilgrimage destination.

BARACOA — Cuba's First Colonial Settlement

Cuba's first Spanish settlement (1511), founded directly on dense Taíno occupation; site of the Cruz de la Parra. The earliest ground where Reconquista Catholicism landed on an already-claimed indigenous field. The "every layer adds, no layer subtracts" pattern is most concentrated and most chronologically legible here than anywhere else on the island.

CAVE OF PATANA (Maisí, Guantánamo Province) — Oldest Named Taíno Sacred Site in Cuba

Site of the Gran Cemí de Boinayel; the stalagmite base and surrounding petroglyphs remain in situ. The primary idol was extracted to the Smithsonian (National Museum of the American Indian, Maryland) in 1915 with no spiritual dispossession of the site. There is no record of any Christian, revolutionary, or indigenous renunciation of this site. The oldest identifiable Taíno sacred object still in Cuban ground — and the site remains formally unchallenged by any subsequent tradition. [7]

PUNTA DEL ESTE (Isle of Youth) — Pre-Taíno Archaic Ceremonial Site

Cave #1 contains 213 pre-Columbian pictographs, a concentric-circle central motif with an east-pointing arrow interpreted as a solar/cosmological marker, and hematite-stained human bones from secondary burials dated up to 2,000 years old. Predates Taíno presence. One of the deepest layers of unrelinquished pre-Christian spiritual claim on the island. [7, 8]

AMBROSIO CAVE (Hicacos Peninsula) — Pre-Columbian Ceremonial Space

Contains over 70 red-and-black archaic pictographs of both geometric and mythological figures up to 2,000 years old, in a space formally identified by archaeologists as ceremonial. Predates Taíno. No subsequent tradition has formally addressed what was established here. [7, 8]

GUANAHACABIBES PENINSULA (Pinar del Río) — Oldest Human Occupation Field in Cuba

A field of approximately 140 pre-ceramic archaeological sites representing the oldest continuous human occupation in Cuba — likely the point of first human arrival on the island from the Yucatán or northern South America, approximately 4000–3000 BCE. No political, religious, or spiritual tradition that has subsequently arrived in Cuba has ever formally addressed the claims established here. This is the floor of the stratigraphy. [6, 8]

PORT CITIES — Historical Entry Points

Conquest, slavery, and trade entered through Cuba's ports. These sites carry historical blood covenants and remain economically and socially significant as emigration departure points.

UNIVERSITIES & SCHOOLS — Ideological Formation Centers

Primary sites of state ideological conditioning. The moral imagination of each generation has been shaped here. Also sites of emerging youth resistance and spiritual openness.

PRISONS — Concentrated Suffering & Contested Space

Sites of known detentions of religious leaders, political prisoners, and civil society actors. Concentrated human suffering; spiritually contested.

HOSPITALS — Scarcity & Life-Decision Nexus

Abortion provision, scarcity of medicine, end-of-life decisions, and moral gray-zone medicine practice. Key site for understanding how survival ethics operate in professional contexts.

BORDERS & AIRPORTS — Emigration Geography

The physical and emotional landscape of departure. Site of family separation, grief, hope, and the spiritual weight of "leaving." Intelligence on community cohesion, hope levels, and missional commitment can be read here.

07 REDEMPTIVE THREADS & MORAL CAPITAL

A complete assessment of Cuba's moral terrain must account for both bondage and preservation. The following are documented, analytically verifiable reserves of moral capital that represent counterweights to the structural pathologies identified in preceding sections.

Persistent Family Solidarity

Despite migration, surveillance, and scarcity, Cuban family systems demonstrate exceptional sacrifice, mutual support, and intergenerational care. This is not cultural romanticism. This is a documented structural buffer against total moral collapse.

Churches as Relief Infrastructure

Congregations across denominations are documented functioning as food, medicine, and emotional-support hubs during blackouts and shortages. [39, 22] These are not merely religious communities; they are active social infrastructure.

Documented Revival and Spiritual Receptivity

Sustained accounts of church growth, spiritual openness, and missional movement exist across denominations and regions. [40, 41, 42] This is among the least-reported realities about Cuba outside missionary networks.

Historical Voices of Conscience

Bartolomé de las Casas, José Martí, and independence voices against slavery, tyranny, and moral hypocrisy represent a tradition of Cuban moral courage. This tradition is not extinguished as it lives in pastors, grandmothers, and lay leaders operating without headlines.

Humor, Endurance, and Resilience

Cuban capacity for humor under pressure, creative endurance in scarcity, and musical culture as communal expression are soft power assets and indicators of spiritual resilience that should not be dismissed as irrelevant to operational assessments.

"Daniels" in Compromised Institutions

Across healthcare, education, public administration, and the military, individuals are documented maintaining personal integrity within structurally corrupt systems. These actors represent leverage points for any engagement strategy targeting institutional reform.

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *Cuba is heavily bound, not abandoned. The distinction between these two assessments is operationally decisive for every decision-maker category this report serves.*

08 DECISION-MAKER DOMAIN BRIEFS

The following briefs translate the preceding intelligence into the specific operational considerations most relevant to each decision-maker category.

FOR POLICYMAKERS & PROGRAM OFFICERS

- Religious freedom conditions are classified as extremely poor by three independent authoritative bodies [2, 3, 1, 5]. Administrative tools for suppressing religious activity are comprehensive and actively applied.
- The moral ecosystem is not primarily the product of Cuban character, but it is the product of structural conditions (scarcity, surveillance, corrupt institutions). Policy interventions that treat moral failures as personal rather than structural will misdiagnose the problem.
- The Catholic Church occupies a symbolic and social role without proportional institutional independence. Protestant and evangelical networks operate with greater grassroots freedom but higher risk exposure.
- Outmigration is the most significant destabilizing social force active in 2026. Any policy framework that does not account for mass emigration as a moral and demographic variable is incomplete.
- Organized crime penetration [24] represents an under-assessed dimension of institutional decay with direct implications for governance, enforcement, and any engagement strategy.

FOR INTELLIGENCE & DILIGENCE PROFESSIONALS

- Public transcript vs. private transcript: all collection from Cuban sources must account for habituated double-speech. What is said openly is not reliably what is believed privately. Trust must be earned through time and demonstrated confidentiality before depth becomes accessible.
- Religious actor networks, especially unregistered house churches and Afro-Cuban religious lineage structures, represent significant social intelligence infrastructure. Both carry information about community conditions, state pressure, and population sentiment that formal channels do not surface.
- State infiltration of registered religious communities is documented. Relationships within registered institutions carry higher counterintelligence risk than contact with informal networks. [3, 30]
- Behavioral indicators worth collection: botánica traffic patterns, Santería festival timing, church congregation size changes, emigration decision clusters, black-market access structures, and prayer network communications.
- Key intelligence gaps: The internal dynamics of Abakuá structures, authentic Palo Monte lineage mapping, and the actual penetration of Espiritismo at household level across provinces are under-documented.

FOR MISSION ORGS, FOUNDATIONS, & CHURCH NETWORKS

- Entry assumption: Cuba is not a blank religious field. Every community encountered, Catholic-colonial, Afro-Cuban syncretic, revolutionary atheist, and revival-shaped layers, already have a complex spiritual inheritance and are all simultaneously present. The pre-Columbian archaic substrate identified in §02 underlies all of these and has not been addressed by any prior tradition.
- "Double belonging" is the default, not the exception. Theological challenge framed as confrontation will close access. Framing that begins with the practical question of where trust actually rests will open it.
- The battle for allegiance is primarily a battle for trust, not for theological correctness. Cubans resort to orishas because they feel unprotected; they resort to lies because truth is dangerous. Addressing the root fear matters more than addressing the surface practice.

- When a believer attempts to break from the syncretic system, resistance is often multi-vectored — coming from family, social networks, and spiritual pressure simultaneously. This reflects the coalition pattern in §02: five centuries of spiritual layers that have coexisted and reinforced each other, not competed. Discipleship strategies must account for the whole stack, not just the most visible element.
- Churches already on the ground are operating as relief infrastructure. Engagement that ignores existing local church capacity and positions external actors as primary agents will damage relationships and misread the terrain.
- Safety and ethical conduct: Do not ask questions that could generate state suspicion for the person answering. Consent, anonymity, and digital security are moral obligations, not optional protocols.
- Documented revival movements suggest significant spiritual receptivity, particularly among youth. The question is what they are being offered and by whom, not if they are open.

FOR TACTICAL & SECURITY PLANNERS

- Population moral condition: The dominant survival ethic ("if my family eats and no one dies, it is acceptable") does not map to either regime loyalty or principled resistance. It maps to pragmatism. Population behavior under pressure will be driven by material conditions, not ideological commitments.
- Institutional integrity is near-absent across state structures. Corruption is systemic, not exceptional. Any operational assumption that Cuban institutions will behave as coherent, principled actors is an analytical error.
- Religious actor networks represent the most robust non-state organizational infrastructure on the island. They operate under pressure, have established communications, and maintain community loyalty in conditions where state institutions have failed.
- Afro-Cuban religious structures (especially Abakuá in Havana and Matanzas) maintain oath-based brotherhood loyalty and social protection functions. These represent organized social networks with established authority hierarchies not visible through conventional institutional mapping.
- Emigration as force-dispersal: The mass departure of young Cubans has removed a significant percentage of the population most likely to organize, resist, or lead. This has both stabilizing and destabilizing implications depending on the operational scenario.
- Fear is the primary social control mechanism. Any environment where that fear is disrupted whether it be through blackouts, economic collapse, or external events, it will produce unpredictable behavioral shifts. Current crisis conditions are stress-testing the fear infrastructure.

09 CONDITIONS FOR MORAL RENEWAL

This section does not predict outcomes or recommend policy. It presents the analytical conditions under which moral renewal in Cuba would become measurable.

COMPARATIVE REFERENCE CASES: The conditions below are derived from analytic comparison with three societies that underwent partial moral recovery after prolonged surveillance, repression, or ideological enforcement: **(1) Post-1989 East-Central Europe** — Poland, the Czech Republic, East Germany, and Romania, where Catholic and Protestant church networks, civic samizdat traditions, and lustration / file-opening processes underwrote a partial restoration of public truth-telling after four decades of state surveillance. **(2) Post-Pinochet Chile (1990–)** — where the Rettig Commission and the later Valech Report initiated truth-telling around military-era abuses while the Catholic Vicariate of Solidarity served as the principal institutional carrier of moral memory through the dictatorship. [43]**(3) Post-Apartheid South Africa (1996–)** — where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission tied moral recovery explicitly to public confession, religious framing, and acknowledged victimhood. None of these is a predictive model for Cuba; each is an analytic reference for what the structural conditions of moral renewal have looked like elsewhere when surveillance societies have begun to recover.

1. Truth-Telling at Scale

Historical moral recovery in other heavily surveilled societies has required a critical mass of individuals willing to tell the truth at personal cost whether it's in families, in churches, in professional settings, and eventually in public life. Cuba's specific version of this condition is the dismantling of the double-speech habit that has been structurally rewarded for six decades.

2. A Purified Church

Religious communities that reject syncretism, fear, and patronage while maintaining pastoral care for people embedded in those systems. This requires leaders willing to confront internal compromise, including state accommodation, doctrinal confusion, and rivalry, before addressing external conditions.

3. Healing of the Fragmented Family

Addressing the wounds of the "missing chair" — abandoned children, aging parents separated from their families, those orphaned emotionally by migration and ideological displacement. This is a relational project operating at neighborhood and family scale, not primarily a political one.

4. Reformation of Conscience

A moral vision not defined by party, patron, or survival, but grounded in a transcendent ethical framework. Whether interpreted through a theological or natural-law lens depends on the decision-maker's framework. The operative condition is the same: a conscience that asks "What is right?" rather than "What do I need to get by?"

5. Material Stabilization

No moral renewal project can be sustained in conditions of extreme scarcity where survival ethics are rational responses to material reality. This is not to subordinate moral analysis to economics. This is to recognize that the two are not separable in the Cuban context.

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *Cuba can become more moral, but not through political intervention alone. The primary arena is the conscience and allegiance of ordinary Cubans, beginning with the moral integrity of religious community life. External actors who ignore this arena, or who believe political change automatically produces moral restoration, will misread the depth of what is required.*

APPENDIX A

Moral Disorder Index™ (MDI) Analysis

Cuba — Country Scorecard, Run Date 03 May 2026

A.1 Headline Finding

Cuba ranks #1 of 195 nations on the UnseenFront™ Moral Disorder Index™ (MDI), with a composite score of 61.3 / 100 — the highest level of structural moral disorder measured anywhere on earth as of the most recent run (03 May 2026). The score sits squarely inside the Severe band (50+) and is over 1.5 standard deviations above the population-weighted world mean of 40.4 [44]. "The MDI classifies Cuba's Religion Type as communist and atheist — grouping it with regimes whose state ideology is officially atheist (China, North Korea, Vietnam) rather than with the Christian-nation cohort, despite Cuba's heavily Christian-heritage population. The MDI's Christian-nation average of 35.4 is therefore not Cuba's peer-group comparator; Cuba's relevant comparators are the other communist/atheist states, all of which Cuba still outranks for total disorder."

MDI Headline. Cuba — Total Score 61.3 (Severe band, ▼ Improving by -0.3 since prior run). Coercion Score 80.5 ("High — state-enforced compliance dominates; apparent order reflects coercion, not virtue"). Religion Type: communist_atheist. Population: 11.21M. Last Changed: 03 May 2026.

A.2 Methodology Overview

The MDI methodology measures structural moral disorder across seven dimensions, each scored 0–100 against international primary-source datasets. The composite Total Score is the weighted mean of the seven sub-scores. A separate Coercion Index identifies regimes whose apparent social order is enforced rather than chosen — flagged as COERCED when coercion ≥60 and disorder ≤50.

The seven disorders measured:

- **Truth** — free expression, media independence, propaganda [45][46]
- **Authority** — corruption, lawlessness, totalitarian institutional capture [25][45]
- **Body** — abortion, suicide, out-of-wedlock births, bodily autonomy violations [47][48][49]
- **Family** — child marriage, FGM, divorce, family dissolution, polygamy — UNICEF, DHS, Pew [50][51]
- **Sovereignty** — national governance integrity, foreign coercion, institutional functioning [1][45]
- **Sacred** — religious freedom suppression, apostasy pressure, persecution intensity [2][3][5][52]
- **Creation** — ideological denial of biological/ecological reality [45][53]

Bands: Severe (50+), Critical (44–49), High (39–43), Elevated (34–38), Concerning (28–33), Low (<28). All inputs are normalized to a 0–100 disorder scale where higher = more disordered.

A.3 Cuba — Per-Disorder Scorecard

Cuba's composite score is driven by extreme readings on Truth, Authority, Family, and Sacred — the four dimensions most directly shaped by single-party Marxist-Leninist rule, surveillance, religious-freedom restrictions, and the long

collapse of family formation under economic crisis. Sovereignty is the lone dimension where Cuba scores well, reflecting stable (if authoritarian) national governance and the absence of civil war or external occupation.

1. Truth 80.5 (*Severe*)

Severe suppression of free expression, state-controlled media, and systemic lying in public life.

2. Authority 79.8 (*Severe*)

Severe government corruption, lawlessness, and totalitarian control of institutions.

3. Body 56.1 (*Severe*)

Very high out-of-wedlock births ($\approx 70\%$); abortion available on request to 12–14 weeks (Tier: on_request_limited).

4. Family 69.8 (*Severe*)

Significant child marriage (29% of girls); family dissolution (70% of births outside marriage).

5. Sovereignty 22.1 (*Low*)

Relatively stable sovereignty with functioning national governance.

6. Sacred 69.5 (*Severe*)

Severe suppression of religious freedom, mass apostasy, and entrenched spiritual darkness; mandatory state registration of all religious bodies.

7. Creation 33.1 (*Concerning*)

Some creation disorder through ideological pressure on biological reality and environmental ideology.

A.4 Key Drivers & MDI Narrative

MDI identifies six structural drivers behind Cuba's #1 ranking: suppression of free expression and truth; state propaganda and systematic lying; cultural normalization of moral relativism; legal suppression of religious expression; systemic government corruption; and institutional overreach with erosion of subsidiarity.

MDI Narrative (verbatim). "Cuba exhibits severely disordered laws and culture — good is called evil and evil called good. Primary drivers: suppression of free expression and truth; state propaganda and systematic lying; cultural normalization of moral relativism; legal suppression of religious expression. Strong spiritual disorder exists; a culture of death and moral inversion have penetrated institutions deeply."

A.5 Coercion Overlay

Cuba's Coercion Score of 80.5 places it in the highest tier of state-enforced compliance globally. The MDI Coercion Label reads: "High — state-enforced compliance dominates; apparent order reflects coercion, not virtue." Cuba does not receive the COERCED flag (which is reserved for nations whose disorder ≤ 50 despite high coercion) because Cuba's underlying disorder is itself severe; coercion in Cuba is not masking latent moral health but is one of the active mechanisms producing the disorder.

A.6 Mapping the MDI to This Assessment

Each MDI dimension corresponds to specific sections of the main assessment, providing quantitative anchoring for any qualitative field-investigation findings:

Truth (80.5) → §5.2 'public transcript / private transcript' duality; §6.3 strategic lying as survival skill; §07 information control.

Authority (79.8) → §3.4–3.6 habituated corruption from Republic through Revolution; §05 surveillance state and one-party rule; §6.3 institutional impunity.

Body (56.1) → §6.1 normalized abortion since 1960s; §07 high suicide rates; §3.7 commodification under scarcity.

Family (69.8) → §5.3 mass migration and family fragmentation; §6.2 family breakdown and sexuality; §3.3 enslaved-family destruction as historical substrate.

Sovereignty (22.1) → §02 Spanish, Haitian, US, and Soviet entanglements (historically high) — but §05 confirms current national governance, while authoritarian, is internally functional.

Sacred (69.5) → §4 entire spiritual ecosystem section; §4.8 religious freedom and state control; §3.6 atheist state period 1959–1992 and continuing management of religion.

Creation (33.1) → §04.4–4.6 syncretic spiritual systems contesting biological/created order; §6.2 ideological pressures on family formation.

A.7 Trend & Operational Implication

Cuba's most recent MDI run records a Score Change of -0.3 (▼ Improving), moving from a prior reading of 61.6 to 61.3. The improvement is marginal and does not change Cuba's #1 global ranking, but it is directionally consistent with reduced overt religious-freedom incidents in early 2026 and with limited liberalization of small-scale private economic activity. The operational implication is that the moral-disorder ceiling in Cuba is structural, not circumstantial: incremental policy easing has not produced commensurate moral-order recovery, because the underlying drivers (state control of truth, family, and the sacred) remain intact.

ANALYTICAL NOTE: *The MDI is a structural index, not a verdict on individual Cubans. A 61.3 composite measures the moral disorder of laws, institutions, incentives, and dominant cultural transcripts. It does not measure the conscience or spiritual condition of any specific person. The remnant findings of the main assessment (§08 Where God Is Already at Work) and the MDI's #1 ranking are not contradictory; they describe the same field from different angles. The MDI quantifies the bondage while the assessment locates the breaches in that bondage where moral and spiritual life persist.*

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