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Metadata can Kill

DCMI Conference 2021

*“We kill people based on
metadata.”*

General Michael Hayden, Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
and the National Security Agency (NSA), 2014 [quoted in Amnesty International report]

Early warnings

- 1980s Duncan Campbell raising the alarm about mass surveillance by GCHQ
- 2013 Amnesty International's report on US drone strikes in Pakistan
- 2014 Edward Snowden's revelations about NSA surveillance of metadata

Examples

- Targeting individuals (e.g. drone strikes)
- Control of public dialogue (arrest of activists based on social media activity)
- State-sponsored actions (infrastructure attacks)
- Mis-identification and false arrest
- Metadata manipulation (to cover cyber-criminal activity)

Targeting individuals

"Drone Warfare - Killing by remote control - Drone strikes have killed more than 200 children alone in Parkistan & Yemen' (Ref. Book - Drone Warfare by Medea Benjamin. Pub. Verso 2013.)" by Activist Artist - Chris Holden is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)



Social media monitoring

"Arab Spring [LP]" by
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Infrastructure



"electrical substation" by ugod
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Cyber-criminals

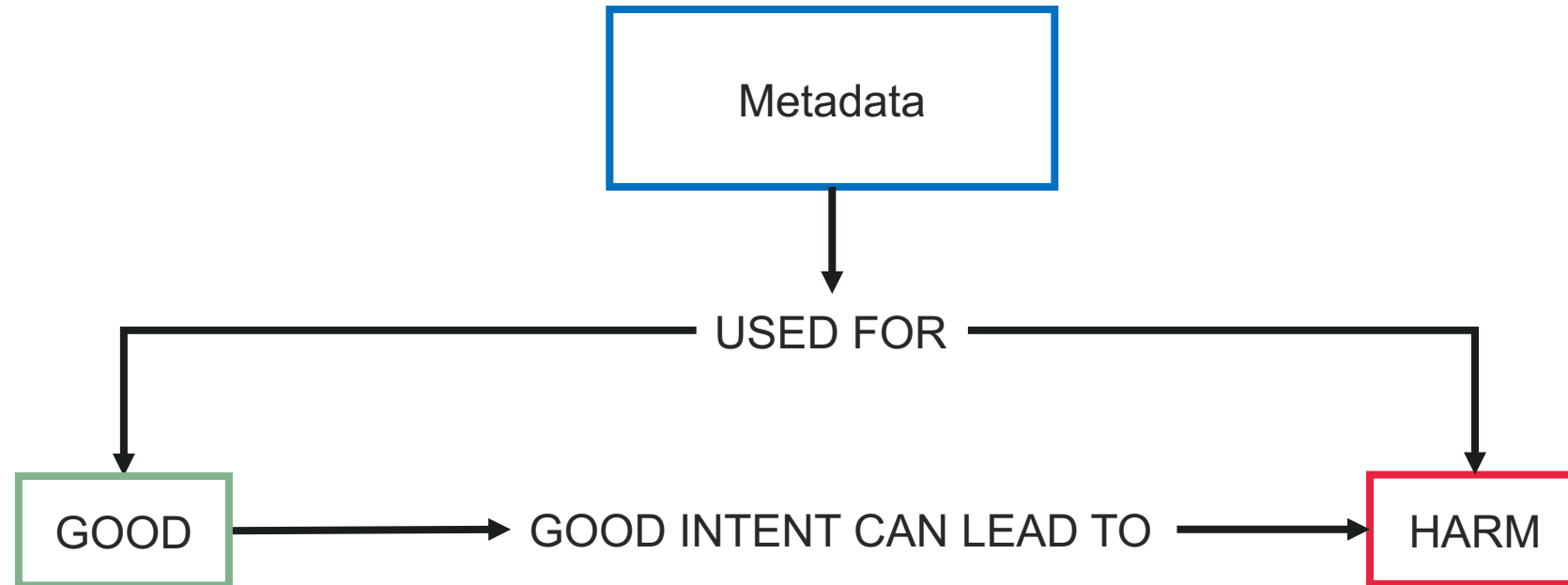
"Hacker" by [Infosec Images](#) is
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What way forward?

- Due process and the rule of law
- Independent overview
- Upholding and protecting privacy
- Good governance (e.g. within security and intelligence community)
- Better regulation of telecoms and media

Is metadata neutral?



References

Daniel Solove (2014) . Nothing to hide – the false trade-off between privacy and security

David Haynes (2018). Metadata for information management and retrieval. Facet Publishing, 2018

David Haynes (2018). Metadata – the political dimension. Alexandria

Amnesty International (2013). “Will I be next?": US drone strikes in Pakistan



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Thank you!

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