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Assault on Care Home for People with Disabilities in Japan

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Abstract

In the early dawn of July 26, 2016, a man with knives broke into a care home for people with disabilities in the south of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, Japan. The man, Satoshi Uematsu and a former employee of the care home, threatened staff members in their night shift, bound them with zip ties and deprived them of their mobility.

Uematsu started to wake up inmates one by one, checked degrees of their disability, selected inmates whom he regarded as severely disabled, and stabbed or slashed them on their beds. Eventually, 19 inmates were killed and 24 others were injured. After fleeing the care home, he turned himself in to the police.

The event sent a shockwave throughout Japan and even overseas. As for his motive, Uematsu maintained people with severe disabilities should be put under euthanasia. There seems to be no evidence that clearly indicates Uematsu, in developing his own extreme view, absorbed specific ideology or the like in a systematic manner, and it is concluded he developed the view mostly on his own.

Uematsu's case is not generally seen as politically or ideologically motivated, but his attempt of adding theory to his view makes the case more ominous. Though such theory looks obviously irrational to anybody's eyes, it can be enough to give his case more transmissible power in igniting copycat.

Keywords: Assault; Extreme View; Inspire; Copycat

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Assault on Care Home

In the early dawn of July 26, 2016, a man with knives broke into the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home for people with disabilities in Sagami-hara city, Kanagawa Prefecture, the south of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, Japan. The care home housed 157 mentally disabled inmates. The man, Satoshi Uematsu, 26, a former employee of the care home, threatened five staff members in their night shift, bound them with zip ties and deprived them of their mobility.

Uematsu then asked which inmates were severely disabled and incapable of conversations. The staff, in horrible premonition, quickly sensed what he intended to do and cried out to

stop him by saying, "Please. All of them can speak!" However, Uematsu flatly dismissed their desperate plea and replied, "Shut up! You are annoying me. Look, this guy can't speak. Can't you see it?"¹ He started to wake up inmates one by one, checked degrees of their disability, selected inmates whom he regarded as severely disabled, and stabbed or slashed them on their beds. He used several knives including a traditional Japanese kitchen knife with a long but narrow blade.



Satoshi Uematsu from his Twitter

The killing lasted almost an hour from 1:43 a.m. to 2:48 a.m., during which time Uematsu, familiar with the facility, searched room after room to pick up his targets. When he realized one staff member was hiding and likely to have called the police, he stopped killing and fled away. After all, 19 inmates were killed and 24 others were injured. In addition, some staff members suffered minor injuries. At 3:05 a.m., shortly after leaving the care home, Uematsu turned himself in to the local police.

The event sent a shockwave throughout Japan and even overseas. Uematsu's trial was held at the Yokohama District Court in Kanagawa Prefecture from January to March 2020, and his attorney alleged Uematsu, at the time of the assault, had been in a state of mental disorder due to his marijuana use and lacked ability to take responsibility. Thus, he insisted on innocence of his client. However, Uematsu himself argued otherwise, claiming he had been fully competent to take responsibility. As for his motive, Uematsu maintained people with severe disabilities should be put under euthanasia. He even said, "It was wrong for Hitler to kill Jewish people but it was right to kill disabled people."²

In his trial, Uematsu was regarded as a lone offender and no link emerged between him and any radical entity in conducting the assault. On March 16, 2020 the court ruled he was guilty

1 "Sagamihara assault case; Uematsu said, 'They can't speak' and started to stab inmates. Uematsu had happy days in university." Watanabe Kazufumi, Syukan-Bunshyun, May 29, 2021

2 "Marijuana, euthanasia, seven orders - Uematsu justifies killing. Sagami-hara murder case," Sankei Shimbun, January 24, 2020

and sentenced him to death. As he accepted the ruling and did not appeal to a high court, his sentence was finalized.

Uematsu in childhood

Satoshi Uematsu was born on January 20, 1990 in Tokyo. His father was a school teacher for drawing and crafts class and his mother was a cartoonist. Satoshi is their only child, and has grown up and spent most of his life in Sagami-hara city. His classmates in primary school testify they cannot remember anything negative about Uematsu in his childhood. According to them, he was such a cheerful and friendly kid who liked to gain attention from his classmates and used to break the ice in his class by imitating voices of characters in cartoon animation.

In his primary school, there was a class for students with disabilities. However, his classmates recall, "It was nothing special for us including Uematsu to be close to such children. We've never heard him say derogatory words about them."³ However, Uematsu, at least on one occasion, left a remark which seemed to be implicative of his later deed. In his trial, a lawyer who represented the victims' families questioned Uematsu about one essay he wrote during his primary school days. In answering the question, he admitted he had written in the essay that people with disabilities were unnecessary. He said, "I used to see parents come to school to pick up their disabled kids. Then, I came to feel sorry for those poor parents who looked exhausted."⁴

Uematsu in puberty

After he started to go to junior high school, Uematsu seemed to have reached a rebellious period and came to show rough behavior. He tried drinking liquor and smoking cigarettes, committed shoplifting, hung around with delinquent friends, and resisted his parents. His friends remember that when Uematsu lost his temper on some occasion, he punched or kicked anything around him, becoming violent and difficult to soothe.

However, his parents, taking such delinquency as more or less an inevitable step for almost anybody in their puberty and something that would end in due course, mostly remained receptive of what their son did. In fact, Uematsu's rebellious side allegedly subsided sometime during the third year in high school. Concerning his puberty, a psychiatrist who interviewed him for the trial reached an analysis similar to his parents'. He concluded Uematsu's delinquent behavior in his school days could still be regarded as "what is commonly seen among those in their puberty."⁵

At the same time, Uematsu's positive sides are pointed out by his friends in junior high and high schools. According to such testimonies, Uematsu was, like he was in primary school, a

3 "Track Uematsu's life since birth by friends' testimony. Death penalty on Yamayuri En incident," Asahi Shimbun Digital, March 16, 2020

4 Ibid.

5 "Track Uematsu's life since birth by friends' testimony. Death penalty on Yamayuri En incident," Asahi Shimbun Digital, March 16, 2020

popular student who often led his classmates. According to an episode by his high school classmates, when students in his class were reluctant to practice dancing in preparation for a school athletic festival, Uematsu came forward and cheered up his classmates by saying, "Guys, let's get working. Come on!" On this point, both his friends and the psychiatrist appear to have reached the same recognition Uematsu in his school days was never a loner. He was always associated with friends, both males and females.

Initially, it was assumed Uematsu's parents or his relation with them might provide some implication that can account for the origin of his extreme view. However, through his trial, any factor that was likely to link him to such view was not found from his parents. According to the psychiatrist, indeed Uematsu had more or less friction with his parents during his puberty, but such friction cannot be seen as a factor related to his extreme view. Rather, he pointed out Uematsu's relationship with his parents was close and warm. Similarly, his ex-girlfriend mentioned how close his family looked in her testimony. She said, "Uematsu and I used to visit each other's home on weekends. His parents were friendly and welcomed me. As I knew from their conversation, he appeared to be very open to his parents. He even told them where he had dated with me. It seemed to me they were a warm family."⁶

Uematsu in university

In April 2008, Uematsu, having in mind a school teacher for his future career, entered the faculty of education of Teikyo University. According to his friends in those days, Uematsu was a friendly, extroverted and popular figure, especially among members of the futsal club he belonged to. His friend recounts, "When new students came to join our club but were still shy of mingling with us, I saw him encourage such students to join, even pulling them by the arms." At the same time Uematsu dated with one girlfriend after another, having affairs with women he met on match-making websites or by talking to them on streets.

According to his friends, it was around this period Uematsu dramatically changed in his attire and deed. He started to wear flashy clothes and even take law-evading drugs. Besides, he became extremely attracted to tattoos and came to have them on his back. At first, he intended to keep his tattoos small, aware that he must hide them once he started to work after graduation. However, he allegedly gave in to temptation to add more and more tattoos.

In June 2010, Uematsu took an intern training at a care home for disabled people as part of his preparation to become a school teacher. After ending the training, he posted comments in mixi (social networking service), such as "Today I was surrounded by about 200 disabled people!," "It was more exhausting than I had imagined," or "All of them are unclever."⁷ From May to June in 2011, Uematsu took an intern training at a primary school in his hometown. After the training, he posted a comment on mixi, "Kids were really, really lovely."⁸ However,

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Uematsu ate gorgeous Yakimiku steaks for dinner with his girlfriend day before perpetration. Did he mean it as 'Last Supper'?" Sankei News, August 26, 2016

⁸ Ibid.

along with this, he left a comment, "Now that applications for teacher recruitment exams were closed, the possibility I can be a teacher this year has disappeared."⁹

Around September 2011, Uematsu suddenly became an apprentice of a tattoo artist, and allegedly started his training to be a tattoo carver, a career totally different from school teacher. His comment in mixi was, "From now on, I will work as hard as I can to be a tattoo carver."¹⁰ However, he soon dropped out of the training.

In March 2012, Uematsu graduated from the university. Although he acquired a license of school teacher, he started to work at a delivery company. His job was to load vending machines with soft drink cans in his assigned area. However, he came to complain the job was physically hard and his salary was low, and eventually quit the job several months after he started it.

Uematsu as staff member in Tsukui Yamayuri En care home

Satoshi Uematsu's first encounter with the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home for people with disabilities was in August 2012, when he attended a recruitment seminar held by the social welfare cooperation which ran the care home. In his application form, Uematsu mentioned his background of having participated in volunteer activities for disabled people and an intern training at a school for disabled people, and noted such background as the reason for his interest in starting a new career in social welfare service. While the care home initially had an impression that there was something immature in Uematsu, they were eventually convinced they could encourage him to grow through the work. After examined by skill and interview tests, he was employed as a part-time staff member in December 2012 and then, in April 2013, promoted to a regular staff member.

However, according to a report written by the care home after the assault, Uematsu allegedly started to show rude behavior from around May 2013. For example, he "unilaterally stopped his work and went home before the end of his shift," or "wiped inmates' tables in an obviously rough attitude."¹¹ On another occasion, it was found "Uematsu had drawn a graffiti of a wrist watch on an inmate's arm."¹² Thus, he came to be frequently reprimanded by his superiors for such behavior which they saw as inadequate and negligent.

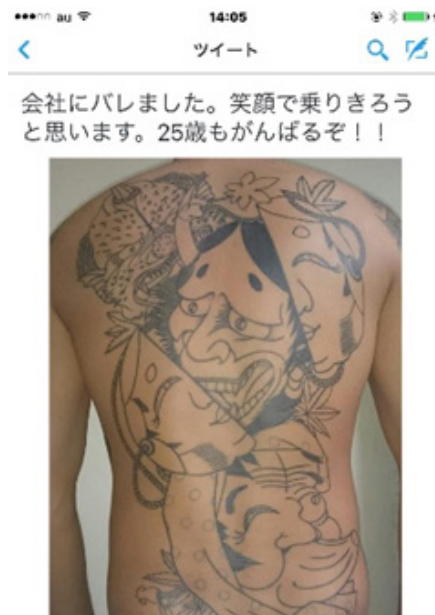
What was more, even after reprimanded, he allegedly did not show any apologetic attitude or sign to correct himself. Eventually, he came to receive guidance directly from the executive staff. However, according to the report, his behavior, even though problematic, still did not constitute enough reason to fire him. Therefore, the care home was to focus its effort on guiding Uematsu to a right direction by paying more attention to his immaturity.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Verification Report on Tsukui Yamayuri En Incident, the Verification Committee on the Tsukui Yamayuri En Incident, on November 25, 2016 (a committee set up under the jurisdiction of Kanagawa Prefecture to verify the counter-measures taken by those concerned)

¹² Ibid



Satoshi Uematsu from his Twitter

Even after efforts to correct his misbehavior were made, troubles occurred endlessly from Uematsu. In December 2014, when he was engaged in bathing support for inmates, his colleague found he had tattoos on his back. It was a female demon's face, a design of a mask used in traditional Japanese Noh dance. In general Japanese views, having tattoos of such a kind is seen as a misconduct traditionally favored by those related to mobs such as Yakuza to distinguish themselves from common people. In any case, such a conduct was in no doubt inconceivable for a staff member of any care home. Naturally, the care home was upset by the finding, and came to have concern on his possible connection with unpreferable entities.

As a result, the care home asked the local police for advice and made an inquiry on whether the police had any record to indicated links between Uematsu and the underworld. However, the police, though they promised to provide support, refused to answer such an inquiry as they were not authorized. Then, the care home consulted its lawyer, whose advice was that it was legally difficult to fire an employee simply because he had tattoos.

In January 2015, the executive staff interviewed Uematsu, asking him whether he had any connections with rogue entities and what he thought about such entities. In the interview, the executive staff said how unpreferable they felt to see their staff member has tattoos. They told Uematsu he was still allowed to work on condition he concealed his tattoos during his shift, adding if he had his tattoos seen by others in the care home, even unintentionally, he would come under in-house penalty. Uematsu accepted the instructions and said he still wanted to continue his job in the care home. Eventually, he remained but was to be interviewed by the executive staff once a month and receive guidance from them.

However, Uematsu's misdemeanors were not limited to his workplace. It was around this time he, who had already taken law-evading drugs in his university days, started to smoke marijuana. He also frequented a nightclub, whose staff recall that among a specific group of regular customers including Uematsu, drugs were rampant. Some of his friends remember he

in those days “even looked like a typical drug addict.”¹³

Uematsu in developing extreme view

After starting to work at the care home, Uematsu initially told his friends, “The inmates are lovable like kids.” However, according to the text of the judgment at the Yokohama District Court, he came to embrace an extreme view from the following experiences and impressions through his new job.

- When he was taking care of inmates, one of them suddenly bit him and made a strange noise.
- He had to handle such inmates who moved around ignoring instructions from the staff.
- On one occasion, he rescued a drowning inmate but did not receive any word of appreciation from the inmate’s family.
- It looked to him that families who had their disabled members treated in the care home only on a temporary basis were in agony of exhaustion. On the other hand, families of inmates in permanent stay seemed so at ease without any burden as to even complain about the care home staff.
- He felt his co-workers treated inmates as if they were not humans. He saw them use violence on inmates, pouring food into inmate’s mouths rather than helping to eat meals.

The text concludes Uematsu, with such experiences and impressions, came to think people with severe disabilities were not only unfortunate but also unnecessary existences who caused misfortune to those around them, especially their families.

Around the same time, Uematsu started to pay attention to global affairs. Above all, he was attracted to one politician in the foreign country, who in his eyes gained popularity and attention with radical allegations. He came to have a conviction that it was a right thing to claim what he believed was right, even though his claim was too controversial for the general public to discuss. Uematsu also cast an eye on the news about terrorist attacks conducted by entities like Islamic State. On this point, he reached a view that poverty was an ultimate source of problems related to violence, concluding people resorted to violence when they ran out of money.

By February 2016, Uematsu started to make comments like the following to his friends.

- People with severe disabilities are unnecessary.
- A society in which people with severe disabilities are to be put under euthanasia should be

¹³ “Uematsu becomes apprentice of tattoo carver. Shadow of drugs looms around him. Friends say, ‘Sato has become insane.’ What drove him to destruction?” Sankei News, July 28, 2016

established.

- He (Uematsu) is to undertake a mission to kill people with disabilities under the Japanese government's approval.
- His lone action might not change society immediately. Even so, his action will reverberate in the society, which is to inspire one after another to stand up to follow suit, thus igniting chain reactions.
- By eliminating people with severe disabilities, more money can be saved and be allocated to more significant purposes, which will eventually contribute to global peace.

The judgment text also mentioned the Illuminati Card, a popular card game, as another factor that influenced him in consolidating his extreme view around that time. Uematsu, who was preoccupied by the game, came to believe the cards had accurately predicted various events and were also telling future events. The game had a legendary character, a savior, and soon he came to have a conviction that the descriptions of the savior in the card indicated he was the very one, likening himself to the character.

Appeal note to Chairman

On February 13, 2016 Uematsu appeared in front of the official residence of the Chairman of the House of Representatives of the Diet in Tokyo. For that day, he had written an appeal note addressed to the Chairman, Tadamori Oshima and intended to hand it to the Chairman. At first, he planned to give an appeal note to the then Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, but eventually decided on Oshima. Though the residence staff refused to accept his note and explained to him they accepted such documents only by mail, he did not give up and came to the residence the next day and the day after that. On the third day, February 15, Uematsu, in a serious plea, suddenly sat straight in front of the gate of the residence and started to repeatedly bow deeply enough to almost hit the ground with his forehead. The residence staff finally compromised and received the note from him, who then thanked the staff and left. The following is the summary of his appeal note.

Dear Chairman Oshima

Thank you very much for receiving my appeal note. I am prepared to slaughter 470 disabled people. I thoroughly understand the madness in my comment. However, having in mind the exhausted faces of families who have disabled members or the lifeless eyes of care home staff, I can't help but take action today for the sake of Japan and the world. The cause for such action is because I thought I might be able to revitalize the global economy and prevent the third world war. My objective is to realize the world in which people who have multiple disabilities and have difficulty in living with their families or participating in social activities are allowed to be given merciful deaths under consent

of their families. I have come to think that what the lives of people with multiple disabilities should be is still an unanswered question. Disabled people only cause misfortune. Now is the time to accomplish revolution and make a painful but essential decision for the sake of all human beings. Japan has to take a great step forward. Chairman Oshima, could you lead the world in a better direction with your power? I will be glad if you convey my message to Mr. Shinzo Abe. This is the answer which I have extracted from my serious consideration on what I can do for human beings. Chairman Oshima, I would like you to help me for the sake of our beloved Japan and all the human beings.

Satoshi Uematsu¹⁴

Operation

I will execute my plan at night when only a small number of staff are on duty. I will target specific two care homes, each of which houses a large number of inmates with multiple disabilities. I will deprive the staff of their mobility and make them unable to take contact with anyone outside by using zip ties. I will never hurt the staff, carrying out my operation swiftly. After killing 260 inmates of the two care homes combined, I will surrender to the police. In conducting my operation, please allow me to make several requests. Please minimize the period of my detention within two years at longest after my arrest, and let me have a life as a free man once I am released. Please acquit me on the grounds that I lost my mind. Please grant me a new name of Takashi Iguro, a new family register, documents necessary for having a new life such as a driver's license, a cost for plastic surgery to change my appearance so that I can go back to the society, and financial support of 500 million yen. I would like you to assure me that you accept these requests, and once you decide to do so, I am going to conduct my operation anytime. I beg you about my requests for the sake of Japan and the global peace. I understand you are engaged in a job which must be tougher than I can imagine, but I sincerely wish you would discuss with Mr. Shinzo Abe about my message.

Satoshi Uematsu xxxx(address) xxxx(phone number)

Staff member, Kanagawa Kyodo Kai¹⁵

It took no time before the residence staff reported to the police about the appeal note. As Uematsu mentioned the name of the social welfare cooperation which ran the Tsukui Yamayuri

14 "Sagamihara murder case, 'I am going to kill 479 inmates.' Uematsu sent appeal note to Chairman of Lower House," Huffington Post, July 26, 2016

15 "Sagamihara murder case, 'I am going to kill 479 inmates.' Uematsu sent appeal note to Chairman of Lower House," Huffington Post, July 26, 2016

En care home in the note and even implied he was one of the cooperation's staff, the police soon contacted the care home. However, no case was made out of his appeal note because it could not be interpreted as intimidation. Technically, Uematsu presents his requests in return for committing attacks but not for abstaining from them.

Uematsu in protective custody

On February 19, Uematsu was interviewed by the executive staff about his appeal note. The interview was conducted at one of the rooms in the care home, and given the risk he implied in his note, police officers stood by at the adjacent room. However, soon after the interview began, Uematsu said he wanted to resign. Therefore, due procedure was taken for his resignation on the spot, and as soon as it was completed, he came under protective custody by the police on the grounds he could pose an imminent threat. Then, he was handed over to the municipal government of Sagami-hara city, which, under the authority of Law Related to Mental Health and Welfare of Persons with Mental Disorders, took him to a hospital for an emergency medical checkup.

At the hospital, the doctor in charge, who studied Uematsu's appeal note, diagnosed him as mania. In his diagnosis form, the doctor wrote he could observe a behavioral problem in Uematsu's intimidating attitude, and noted further misconducts such as murder or assault could be predicted. Mentioning Uematsu's psychological status, the doctor remarked several symptoms such as flight of thinking, elevated mood, irritability, impulsivity, excitement, and violent words were seen. In a urine test conducted on his arrival to the hospital, material related to marijuana was detected. Based on the diagnosis, the municipal government put Uematsu under emergency involuntary admission to hospital, and accordingly he was hospitalized.

However, by March 2, the doctor came to a conclusion that Uematsu's symptoms such as delusion, irritability, or excitement had subsided. According to the doctor, Uematsu came to admit he had been out of his mind and reason his senseless behavior had come as a result of smoking marijuana. Such attitude of his patient convinced the doctor that the danger Uematsu could pose had disappeared. In addition, the doctor confirmed material related to marijuana was no longer detected in his urine. Therefore, the hospital sent a report based on the doctor's diagnosis to the municipal government, which in turn decided to lift Uematsu's hospitalization. On March 3, he was released from the hospital.

Preparation for assault

According to Uematsu, he started to prepare for the assault around January 2016, when he was still a staff member of the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home. In the same period, Uematsu told some of his friends about his "plan," and said he would attract those who were likely to agree to his view. On one occasion, Uematsu suddenly asked his friend what he thought about disabled people, or on another he told his friend he wanted to kill disabled people. Some friends rebuked him and tried to persuade him to renounce such a thought, but in vain. Eventually his friends began to keep a distance from him.

By sometime in February 2016, Uematsu's insanity became a frequent topic among his friends. In the same month, one of his friends happened to visit Uematsu in his home and saw documents titled, "New Japan Order," in which he remembers what seemed like a plan was written. According to this friend, Uematsu, who was wearing a business suit, asked such questions like, "Do I look like a soldier of revolutionary forces?" and repeatedly used the word, "revolution," in his conversation. Uematsu also sent messages that included his extreme view to his friends through LINE app. In one of them, he wrote, "Are severely disabled people really humans?"

According to the judgment text, after he was released from the hospital on March 3, it became less frequent for Uematsu to mention his extreme view, although this change of behavior turned out to be only temporary and superficial at best. In the mid July, he allegedly started to dispose of his belongings in what seemed to be preparation for the assault.

At midnight between July 24 and 25, Uematsu enjoyed marijuana with his friends at a river bank in Sagamihara city. At around 1:30 a.m. on 25, he told his friends he didn't feel well and wanted to go home. He then drove away leaving his friends. When the evening came on the day, he went to a DIY store to buy items like sealing tape, zip ties and a hammer. He then met his girlfriend and dine out with her at a barbecue restaurant. According to her, Uematsu did not mention anything about his plot during the dinner. After parting from her, he took a room at a hotel, called a prostitute by phone and stayed with her for a while. In the predawn of July 26, he left the hotel and appeared at the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home, this time, to carry out what he had planned.

After Assault

Before the trial, Uematsu made such comments like the following in exchanges of letters with the media.

I thought I could change the world where misfortune was rampant.
They (people with disabilities) rob people of fortune and spread unhappiness. I know many people are forced to get engaged in troublesome care of disabled people. I don't think saving human lives unconditionally contributes to increasing happiness.¹⁶

In his trial, Uematsu emphasized he had never psychologically wavered on his view either before or after the assault. He maintained disable people who were unable to communicate should be put under euthanasia because such people are a source of many problems like murders cases of care-givers killing the care-received or increase of social welfare cost.

16 "“Disabled rob people of happiness. Mr. Trump's speech gave me momentum,” Uematsu writes in letter. Sagamihara murder case,” Jiji.Com, 15 July 2017



Cartoon drawn by Uematsu in jail after the assault (from monthly magazine, Tsukuru)

Asked about the victims' families, Uematsu said, "I can understand how much parents want to protect their sons or daughters even though they are disabled, but their lives are dependent on funds provided by our country and not on their family's income. I know our country suffers from a large amount of debt. I believe I can make a contribution in order to decrease the debt by killing disabled people."¹⁷ With regard to the legal action taken by some of the bereaved families to demand compensation from him, Uematsu said, "such families lack objective ways of thinking or they are mentally ill."¹⁸

Before the beginning of his trial, Uematsu handed a note to his lawyer in which he summarized his view. In a section titled, "The order under which many people can have happy life," he indicates seven points of euthanasia, marijuana, casino, armed forces, relations between men and women, esthetics, and environment as what seem like conditions for such order. In his trial, Uematsu, happily mentioning marijuana, alleged it was wonderful and should be legalized as a luxury grocery item. As for armed forces, he said, "Japan should introduce conscription like South Korea, as movie actors in South Korea are energetic and cool. The young in Japan easily drop out of society because they cannot tolerate hardship."¹⁹ When it came to aesthetics, Uematsu made comments like, "As beauty creates virtue, our government should provide allowances to such nationals who are to undergo plastic surgery."²⁰ In addition, he passionately talked about Illuminati Cards, and said, "The cards indicate the truth and according to them, Japan is to be doomed. That is why I've decided to stand up to save our society."²¹

As a rare case for a crime of such magnitude, Uematsu did not appeal to a high court after sentenced to death at the district court. In an interview with the media he said though he was not convinced of the sentencing, it was not right to prolong his trial and to do so was a waste of time.

However, according to media reports, in April 2022, Uematsu made a request of retrial on his

17 "Marijuana, euthanasia, seven orders - Uematsu justifies killing. Sagami-hara murder case," Sankei Shimbun, January 24, 2020

18 Ibid.

19 "Bite off tip of small finger to show apology. Reason why Uematsu said, 'they've understood me,' two days after he received death sentence," Syukan Bunsyun, April 2, 2020

20 Ibid.

21 "Marijuana, euthanasia, seven orders - Uematsu justifies killing. Sagami-hara murder case," Sankei Shimbun, January 24, 2020

case to Yokohama District Court, which is then supposed to decide whether to proceed with or reject his request.

Process of Developing Extreme View

After all, there seems to be no evidence that clearly indicates Uematsu, in developing his own extreme view, absorbed specific ideology or the like in a systematic manner. While his comments entail something implicative of eugenics, no record seems to show he acquired written materials related to the subject. While Uematsu mentioned Adolf Hitler in his trial, his knowledge of the dictator seemed to be quite preliminary, or not more than that of the average Japanese youth. It was likely to be the journalists in their interviews with Uematsu in jail that gave him the knowledge Nazi regime slaughtered the disabled. So far, no specific figure seems to have emerged as someone likely to have inspired him ideologically.

Though Uematsu says he was emotionally attracted by some overseas politician, a closer look indicates it was more the social phenomenon surrounding the politician than the politician himself that gave Uematsu an impression that extreme words could be accepted by the public.²² Uematsu is said to have been associated with a group of young thugs and right-wingers. However, there seems to be no reliable information that indicates his link to the latter. Some point out the possibility he was a so-called online right-winger. However, aside from his quasi-patriotic comments, Uematsu, either in his postings on the internet or his conversations with his friends, seems to have left almost no such comments typically seen among online right-wingers, whose focuses are mostly on ethnicity, that is, matters they assume are either pro- or anti-Japanese.

So far, given what is known about Uematsu, it can be concluded he developed his extreme view mostly on his own. Besides, he tried to add elements of theory to his view by associating what he felt from his own experiences with macro issues such as global terrorism and poverty. Such process of theorizing was further escalated by what he felt from the social phenomenon around the “overseas politician” and what he saw as apocalypses in Illuminati Cards.

Cases by Those Inspired

As a case of such a sensation, the assault on the Tsukui Yamayuri En care home was no exception in producing copycats. Cases like the following ensued by those who claim, to varying degrees, to have been inspired by Uematsu’s case. One of them occurred even a couple of days later. In spite of perpetrators’ discriminatory comments or messages, their motives seem to come from more pleasure, thrills or personal grudge than extremism. Even so, assuming such cases are unlikely to have occurred if Uematsu did not commit the killing, possibility of inspiration by his case cannot be excluded completely.

22 “Some politician” Uematsu mentions is said to be Mr. Donald Trump at the time of the 2016 presidential election in the United States.

- On July 29, 2016, three days after Uematsu's case, a man was arrested for having blackmailed an employment support center for people with disabilities in Yokohama city, Kanagawa prefecture. The man, 34 years old and unemployed, allegedly sent an email on the night of July 27 that threatened to attack the center. According to the police, he mentioned Uematsu's case in his mail.
- On October 13, 2016, about two and a half months after Uematsu's case, flyers were found scattered in front of a care home for elderly people in Mito city, Ibaraki prefecture. As the content of flyers threatened to attack the care home, the police launched an investigation and the care home tightened its security. According to the police and city officials, the flyers are dated on October 13 and say, "Here, I am going to commit something beyond the case in Sagamihara. The staff have to protect their inmates. I am serious." According to the care home staff, they had never received such a threat until then.²³
- On November 11, 2016, about three and a half months after Uematsu's case, a man was arrested for having blackmailed a care home for disabled people in Tsuyama city, Okayama prefecture. The man, 31 years old and unemployed, phoned the care home on the evening of November 10, 2016 and said, "I am a reincarnation of Hitler. Disabled people should die."²⁴ The phone led the care home to be on high alert. The man, after his arrest, mentioned Uematsu's case as his motive for the intimidation. He told the police he had mentioned Hitler in his blackmail as Uematsu did in his comments.
- In October 2020, a woman was arrested for having prepared to attack an employment support center for people with disabilities that she had once worked for in Saga city, Saga prefecture. The woman, 43 years old and unemployed, left home bringing two kitchen knives with an aim of killing inmates and manager of the center. However, shortly after she left home, she was questioned and eventually arrested by police officers who happened to pass by her and detected something suspicious in her behavior. Later, she was prosecuted on charges of preparation of homicide and illegal possession of knives, and she admitted both the charges. According to the prosecutor, the woman, a former employee, had a grudge against the center for having been fired. At the same time she came to feel respect to Uematsu for his killing and eventually, felt like doing the same thing. The woman, in her statement at the end of the trial, said that she had no more temptation to kill inmates or her former coworkers, but she still adored Uematsu.²⁵

Conclusion

Enmity can proliferate like infectious disease, and once it entails some element of theory, it is likely to spread more effectively. Uematsu's case is not generally seen as politically or ideologically motivated, but his attempt of adding theory to his view makes the case more

23 "I will do something beyond Sagamihara case. Threaten to attack inmates. Notes intimidating care home for old people. Mito city," Sankei News, October 13, 2016

24 "I am reincarnation of Hitler, let them die. 31-year-old man arrested for intimidating care home for people with disabilities," Sankei West, November 11, 2016

25 "I respect perpetrator of Sagamihara killing," Kyodo, December 24, 2020

ominous. Though such theory looks obviously irrational to anybody's eyes, it can be enough to give his case more transmissible power in igniting copycats, which is reflected in the sheer number of the above four cases.