

Occupancy Sov is Not Enough

Almost five years after the release of the Dominion sovereignty system there is general agreement that conditions in nullsec need a major shakeup. There are many ideas being suggested on how to improve things, and most are focussed on some form of 'Occupancy Sov', however I think we should broaden our search in an effort to create a cohesive vision of how nullsec should run.

My aim here is to detail changes to sov that could be implemented under the current system in order to transition toward a full 'occupancy' style system.

The intent of the changes is to create a nullsec which is a patchwork of independent entities, preferably more than one per region, fighting small scale conflicts against their neighbours. They should be logistically independent, and capable of producing all the necessary war materials in their own space, without being dependant on Jita. Travelling further than the neighboring region should be hard, but there should be incentives to being out in space harassing your neighbours, and there should be incentives for defending your space against roaming gangs. This involves making changes to all aspects of 0.0 including (list subjects here). These include:

- Reducing the speed at which alliances can cross large distances to allow alliances to have smaller fights unmolested
- Enabling alliances to be more self-sufficient in their space
- Lowering the 'logistical entry bar' for setting up and managing sov so that smaller alliances aren't overwhelmed
- Increasing the power of sovereignty upgrades to increase the number of pilots able to use a system at once, thus increasing population density
- Capital balancing

Before we jump into it though, a little bit about me. I've been playing EVE since mid 2009, and my experience includes sov in the CFC with C0nvicted (where I was an alliance director and military head), NPC 0.0 smallgang with Rote Kapelle, and lowsec faction BS and capitals with Psychotic Tendencies. Currently I am a member of AUTZ corporation Van Deimen's Demise, which has recently moved from NC. to Pandemic Legion. In the interests of full disclosure I should probably include that I own both a titan and super.

Worldshaping and Force Projection

A quick look at an atlas will reveal that many of the borders of real world countries are formed by geographical features. Oceans, lakes, rivers and mountain ranges have historically impeded the easy flow of goods or people. In EVE we don't have any of those features, but we do have gaps of varying lightyear distances between different regions.

Looking at the EVE coalition sovereignty map

(<http://dl.eve-files.com/media/corp/coalitionsov/Coalitioninfluence.png>) you can see that the borders between the CFC to the North and West and N3PL to the South and East sit on the two

longest lightyear gaps on the map. Those gaps create a buffer zone between home territories, across which capitals cannot cross without using potentially unsafe midpoints. This creates a no mans land in which conflict can occur prior to an invasion of another's territory.

In order to enable entities to have smaller conflicts without third parties appearing from several regions away at a moment's notice the speed at which fleets can travel over large distances needs to be reduced.

In order to achieve this I propose the following changes:

1. Spread out the regions in the East and South-East (the Drone Regions and Angel Space) by increasing the light year distance between regions so that they no longer overlap each other. The West is a pretty good model for how things should look.
2. Reduce the bonus of the Jump Drive Calibration skill from 25% per level to 5% per level. To avoid hamstringing titan bridges, black ops BS, and jump freighters, the lost range should be built into the hull of jumpfreighters and black ops BS. Jump portal bridge ranges should be separated from jump ranges, enabling titans and black ops to continue to bridge the same distance. These changes would not prevent alliances from projecting subcapitals, or hinder logistics, but would slow down the movement of capital fleets, potentially keeping distance forces from participating in battles between smaller entities.
3. Introduce a two minute reactivation delay for regular jump drives (not black ops), with a 10% per level reduction added to the jumpfreighter skill. Combined with a reduction in jump ranges this change should make it effectively impossible to cross several regions within a short amount of time, forcing alliances to stage closer to their targets. It should also reduce third-partying and 'batphoning' which would allow smaller alliances to fight without interference.
4. Change jump bridges so that they only allow usage by the owning alliance, similar to cyno beacons. This would prevent coalitions from maintaining giant integrated jump bridge networks across several regions, or at least force them to run many parallel networks.

Logistics and Manufacturing

Dependence on Jita is poison for the dream of small independent nullsec entities. It forces alliances who want to live deep in 0.0 to form alliances to protect their supply routes. It's not possible to jump a jumpfreighter to the Northern part of Branch, or to Period Basis, Cobalt Edge, or Omist without passing through sov space, and it's almost impossible to live in 0.0 without jumpfreighters. Gone are the days of escorting freighter convoys through gates and chokepoints. In today's EVE a freighter convoy would be destroyed swiftly by a marauding capital fleet, which would have plenty of time to assemble and catch it thanks to the warp speed changes.

I'm not suggesting a return to the old days, but instead to give alliances the ability to live independently of Empire space. While great strides have recently been made in allowing 0.0 entities to manufacture and research at home (thanks to the removal of build slots), there are currently two relatively simple things that force dependence on imports: R8 and R32 moons are racial and region specific, as is ice.

Let's have a look at the region Fountain as an example. In Fountain you will only find ice belts containing blue ice, which produces oxygen isotopes, used by Gallente capital ships and Gallente control towers. If you want to use any other races capital or tower you need to import the fuel from elsewhere, which effectively means Jita.

Here is Dotlan's moon scan of Fountain: <http://evemaps.dotlan.net/region/Fountain/moons>. The distribution of the R16's and R64's is relatively even, but when it comes to R8's only Titanium is present in any appreciable quantity, and for the R32's only Caesium. Titanium is reacted into Titanium Carbide, which is an essential material for Caldari T2 ships, but only Caldari. That said, it's not possible to build any T2 ships without Technetium, Hafnium and Mercury anyway. Fountain isn't alone in this issue. Each region contains a racial isotope, a racial R8 moon (*of a different race to the isotope*), and only one type of R32, forcing residents to either import moon products and fuels from Empire, or simply import pre-made ships and modules, which is far easier.

I have two proposals that I believe should be fairly simple:

1. Wipe and reseed all the R8 and R32 moons so that they have a 25% chance of spawning as any one of the four racial options
2. Either change ice belts to contain all four types of racial ice, or change the ice spawns so they have a 25% chance of spawning each of the different types of belt every time they respawn.

Now that Tech is no longer worth fighting wars over this redistribution of moons should not be seen as 'nerfing a specific group', and a limited redistribution will be far less effort to rescan than a full moon reset (for example in Fountain only around 10% of moons would need to be rescanned).

TCU's, I-hubs and Indices

Under the current sov system you must place a TCU to gain control of a system, and then an I-hub to secure that control (gain RF timers) and allow you to install upgrades. The TCU takes no further part in anything - it has no timers, and the only options when interacting with it are to turn it off or transfer it to another corp in the same alliance. TCU's are essentially pointless, serving only as a 'flag' and adding a small amount of hitpoints to be destroyed before the system can be taken.

I-hubs have their own problems; because of their massive volume (750,000m3) they are only able to be transported and deployed by freighters. All but the smallest sov alliances simply use chains of titans to bridge the freighters around with very little risk.

This mechanic sets the 'entry bar' for sov at 'owns a couple of titans' which creates difficulties for smaller, newer groups. To encourage new player groups in 0.0 we need to balance the advantage of near infinite resources owned by the large alliances and create a mechanic which allows smaller groups to operate with comparative risk,

I-hub upgrades have a couple of issues.

Like I-hubs themselves, certain upgrades (level 5's, JB's, beacons, and jammers) are so large they only fit into freighters, which, even more so than the I-hubs themselves, is a huge logistical hassle for smaller alliances but no issue for larger ones.

I-hub upgrades, especially the Pirate Detection Array which spawns combat anomalies, simply don't generate enough sites to provide for more than half a dozen people per system. This creates a population density problem where alliances are forced to hold many systems to enable their members to rat and make isk, while also spreading them too thinly to be able to quickly form defence fleets to protect themselves against fast moving roaming gangs.

Security rating (also known as truesec) poses an interesting challenge. Designed to make some systems more valuable than others, and thus drive conflict, it also has the side effect of making many systems, and in fact some entire regions (Cloud Ring, Pure Blind, and Providence spring to mind) almost useless for ratting and individual isk making.

Proposal: Cut the bottom half out of the truesec spread, effectively making a -0.01 system the same as a -0.5 system is currently. Keep the same number of sec level 'bands', but reduce the difference between them so that all systems are at least moderately worthwhile.

Sov indices are the system by which usage of a solar system is measured. There are three: Strategic, which increases over time and unlocks strategic upgrades like jump bridges and cyno beacons.

Military, which increases based on rats killed and unlocks anomaly, DED complex, and wormhole spawners.

Industry, which increases based on the volume of ore mined, and unlocks mining and hacking/archaeology site spawners.

The Strategic index is the only one that serves a clear purpose, forcing alliances to hold systems for a certain length of time before being able to upgrade them, however the Military and Industry indices, because they constantly decay over time, force alliances to choose which systems to upgrade, often leaving marginal systems without upgrades and completely unused.

Here are my proposals:

1. Merge the TCU with the I-hub into one structure, called the System Control Unit (SCU). It should be the same size as a TCU (able to fit into a blockade runner) and have the HP and RF timers of the I-hub.
2. Enable the TCU (or SCU) to set a system wide tax rate (we know this is possible because the ESS can measure all bounties in a system) which would pay out into the corp wallet of the corp holding the SCU, to allow alliances to collect an alliance wide income based off activity in their space.
3. Shrink I-hub upgrades to a size that enables them to be transported by Deep Space Transports or cargo expanded T1 haulers.
4. Double the number of sites spawned by each I-hub upgrade, to allow more people to use a system concurrently.
5. Remove the Military and Industry indices, or at least remove them as a requirement for installing system upgrades, and allow alliances to upgrade their systems as much as they want without the need to increase or maintain indices.

These changes should make life easier for smaller alliances, enabling them to manage their own logistics, while having little impact on the lives of large blocs, because they already possess superior logistical capabilities.

Capital Balance

Because of the extreme power of capital ships, and their use en-mass in sovereignty warfare under the current system, any discussion of sov is incomplete without a discussion of capital balancing.

Carriers - In my opinion they should be extremely versatile ships, which they are, but for the 'logistics' of the capital world they have just a little too much power against subcaps with their effectively unlimited drone bays. The drone bay should be split in two, with 75,000m3 for a fighter bay, and 1,500m3 for a regular drone bay, which would still allow several flights of sentries, but not nearly as many slowcat carriers currently carry. The current racial bonuses of the carriers create enough differences to allow each of them to have roles where they excel, though the nidhoggur and thanatos are less widely used than the chimera and archon.

Dreads - They're in good shape at the moment, with the exception of the revelation, which has both the lowest dps and tracking of the three armour dreads, and is even out-damaged by the phoenix. Replacing the cap use bonus with 4% armour resists/level and lowering the base cap use of capital guns would give it a niche as the tankiest armour dread.

Supercarriers - As with everything in EVE, their problems lie with scaling. When used in small groups as dps ships, as entities like Shadow Cartel and Snuff Box do, they are relatively well balanced, but when used en-mass and fitted with remote repair modules they become almost invulnerable to everything other than titan doomsdays. Removing their bonuses to capital remote armour, capacitor, and shield transfers and halving the volume of fighter bombers to allow them to carry multiple flights would focus them back into the dps role. A new fitting option in the form of capital energy neutralizers could make up for some of the lost utility, and provide interesting new options.

Their slot layouts and racial bonuses provide each of them with roles and specializations, and (with the exception of the Hel), should be left as is.

Nyx - Highest dps and midslots for utility (sebos, tackle, drone nav comps)

Aeon - High tank, moderate dps, and midslots for utility

Wyvern - High tank and dps, but very little utility

Hel - Low tank, slots allow for good dps and moderate utility, with excellent agility for 'gank and run' tactics. A racial skill bonus to agility and/or fighter and bomber speed would help with this role.

Titans - I really don't know what should happen to titans. They have suffered nerf after nerf over the years, with no sign of the 'role rebalance' that was promised back in 2012. Until they get a new role they could use a 50% increase to turret/launcher dps to bring them up speed and enable them to out-dps their dreadnought cousins.

In conclusion, I believe that through reducing the speed at which groups can cross large distances, enabling alliances to be more self sufficient and to sustain higher populations, lowering the logistical entry bar, and tweaking capitals we can increase the quality of life in nullsec. These changes could be implemented to shake things up under the current sov system while changes to the sov capture mechanics are being worked on.