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E-Commerce, Networking and Political Economy of Despair: Rethinking the Centre/Periphery of Nation States as 'Sliding Signifiers'

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Abstract
This paper employed postcolonial insights from Jeremy Weate and critical discourse analysis to argue that e-commerce is a complex metanarrative that has the potential to emancipate mankind; however, it is susceptible to discourses of joblessness, discrimination and lawlessness. These discourses impacted negatively on the political economies of developing countries and justified state interventionism in these countries. But state interventionism has shown its limitations in the development of African countries. Therefore, the state may be appropriated by the nation to realize development in these countries, until the time when the nation can realize development on its own. At any rate, as literature of the continent show, the state and the nation have now become shifting narratives at the service of digital capital.

Keywords
E-commerce, networking, political economy of despair, centre/periphery of nation states, critical discourse, postcolonial narratives

1.0 *Introduction*

One of the most popular activities on the Web 2.0, which is a sign of capital in this age of globalization is the e-commerce marketplace. The online marketplace came about as a new imperial culture with much allure to replace the old brick and mortar ways of transacting. It came with the ideology of 'sell and bought' according to which economic life should be individualized and privatized in whatever sector of life such as shopping, leisure, etc. The new ideology was supported by an infrastructure comprised of computers, modems, electricity, cables, and the Internet. In 1991, the Internet was opened to commercial use and thousands of businesses took up residence at web sites. In 1994, its security protocols (e.g. HTTP) and DSL enabled rapid connection and global access to the Internet. In 2000, many businesses in Western Europe and the US signified the presence of their products/services in the World Wide Web. But the meaning of the word 'e-commerce' started to change and people defined it as the process of purchasing available goods and services over the Internet thanks to the employment of secure connections and electronic payment services. With the dot-com collapse of 2000, many e-commerce companies were affected negatively, but the 'brick and mortar' retailers acknowledged the benefits of electronic commerce and started to add new capabilities to their web sites (e.g., Webvan and Albertsons and Safeway). By 2002, the Business-to-Business (B2B) model was developed and e-commerce sales continued to increase up to 2008, when e-commerce sales accounted for 3.4% of total sales.

Unlike with mail order catalogs and 'brick and mortar' stores, which were the old cultural practices, e-commerce offered consumers possibilities to search through huge databases of products/services where they could see real prices, compare prices, and mouse click to select and purchase a product at best prices through placement of order taps. Online vendors had flexible advantages like search engines, the web for advertising, tracking customer preferences and marketing. Among the first Internet companies to enable electronic transactions were Amazon and eBay, Hewlett Packard, Dell, Staples and Office Depot that sold music, books, computers, office supplies and other consumer electronics in the World Wide Web. In time, the sale extended to a variety of other products and services like electronics, software, DVDs, video games, music CDs, MP3s, apparel, footwear, health products, etc. Amazon established an affiliate marketing programme, and was able to obtain almost 40% of its sales from third party sellers and affiliates. In 2008, Amazon infiltrated into the cinema industry and the domain Amazon.com seduced over 615 million consumers every year thanks to its web site review system, which enabled visitors to rate any product on rating scales from one to five stars, its user-friendly search facility with keywords in the database.

The history of e-commerce is one of a new, virtual universe that is evolving in accordance with consumer advantages. The online e-commerce marketplace is a website where information about a product or service is provided by a multitude of third parties, while a marketplace operator processes transactions. E-marketplaces are multichannels that streamlined the production process. The marketplace operator processed consumer transactions and after delivery, they were fulfilled by participating wholesalers or retailers through a process called drop shipping. Other capabilities of the e-marketplace included auctioning (forward or reverse), ordering, advertisement, cataloguing, and trading exchange functionalities like RFQ and RFI or RFP capabilities. These websites enabled users to register and sell (many or single) products for a "post-selling" fee. With the aggregation of products from a wide array of providers in the marketplace, the selection was wide and the availability of products was higher than in vendor-specific online retail stores. It was from 2014 that e-marketplaces became abundant and offered a wide variety of general interest products catering to virtually all the needs of consumers. Some e-marketplaces were consumer specific and catered to specific segments of consumers only. The platforms for selling online as well as the user interfaces and experiences were very important as people logged on to e-marketplaces that were organized with much more accessible products. There were different marketplace services such as online outsourcing of professional IT services (Radkevitch, et al. 2006: 40-57), [1] search engine optimization (SEO), marketing and skilled trades work and crafts (Murray, 2013). [2]

E-marketplaces operated in what is called the sharing economy. The platforms they offered were peer to peer (or ‘switch’) marketplaces. In the sharing economy platforms, users typically switched between buying and selling services or goods, such as on AirBNB. As the sharing economy was inspired chiefly by the open source philosophy (Hamari, et al. 2016: 2047-2059.), [3] many open source projects emerged devoted chiefly to launching a peer to peer marketplaces such as Sharetribe and Cocorico. In due course of time, e-commerce impacted the lifestyle of people across the globe as with an increasing wealth of the middle, bourgeoisie class, those with money no longer had the time nor did they desire to prepare meals as in the past. Although products like books, music, movies, and scientific papers were the overall preferred type of goods, as they were also consumed electronically, other products like tinned food, beverages, and ready-made consumables that were not so popular as media products, started to become some of the fastest-growing products in the industry (Tregurtha and Vink 2002). [4] Now, the e-commerce marketplace started to internalize these shifts in real-life, together with changes in everyday economic activities and these socio-ideological turmoils. The implication here was that agricultural products and services from Third World nation states were starting to get marginalized by this technological economy. Many services in online marketplaces started to take up *jobs that were to go to local industries* in developing societies that could not compete on price against outsourced providers. In addition, because there was often no regulation in the online marketplace, there was a high risk that the salience of online photos would give room to discrete practices of *discrimination* on the basis of race and gender, and the fact that would-be discriminators could even act without ever personally confronting their victims, gave additional weight to this argument. The *laws* and regulations surrounding online marketplaces were quite underdeveloped; as a consequence, there was a discrepancy between the responsibility, accountability and liability of the marketplace and third parties. Online marketplaces and platforms lacked consumer protection (Nicholls 2015). [5] Especially consumers of e-commerce products and services from developing nation states became vulnerable to high prices and this also meant further draining of their already scarce resources.

The challenge for these marketplaces was therefore how to offer a framework for companies that wished to design and manage a thriving marketplace and, at the same time, minimize the *risk of discrimination and marginalization*. Although the imperative was for platforms to hold themselves to a high standard in this regard, they could not and their practices paradoxically ended up disintegrating the political economy of nation states in the Third World and exposing clients to segregation. This paper has a two-fold aim; first, it sets out to investigate how the power of this global, neoliberal technology, could have been exercised to impact on the political economies and identity politics of developing nation states and diasporic communities of the world.

2.0 Methodology

Drawing from critical discourse analysis (CDA) and from post-colonial social narratives as public 'writings' (Weate, 2003), [6] the paper invests in a broader framework that facilitates an evaluation of what is signified when language is deployed to both describe and explain phenomena. I will explain the CDA component in some detail as the social narratives as public 'writings' will receive full treatment in the section below. CDA is deployed in this paper to explore the dense relationships of determination and causality that exist between the discursive texts, practices, and events of commerce and their wider political economy structures, relations and processes. In particular, it investigates how (commercial) texts, practices and events arise out of and yet, are shaped ideologically by power relations and struggles over power (Fairclough 1995: 132). [7] Online commercial texts, language and communication are therefore considered in their larger sociological context, given that they both inform and are shaped by wider processes within society. In this way, digital texts, practices and events do not simply passively report upon the offline world, but they imbue it with signification, re-fabricate it, re-shape its perspectives and call the world into being. Discourse here refers to various ways in which communication between groups is achieved and has an 'active relation to reality' (Fairclough 1992). [7] Fairclough (2003) [7] proposes three markers of discourse in social life, namely, genres, representation and styles of being. Digital 'genres' refer to the specific ways that commercialism is manipulated and framed as discourse. The digital commercial is significant as it provides a framework for an audience to understand discourse, and owing to this quality, it is the locus not only of power and domination but also of resistance. Digital commercial representation via websites provides the means by which similar components of the world can be appreciated and comprehended from various perspectives. The digital commercial style is the way in which discourse is employed to constitute a sense of identity and being, of doing and of how this particular practice is interpreted, analyzed, produced, formed and received through political, economic and cultural venues (Fairclough 2003). [7] The sociological effect of online commerce is contingent on how the audience evaluates, understands, employs and resists this discourse. Thus, digital commercial discourse should not be considered in isolation: discourses act upon and influence each other in an intertextuality act. Intertextuality has to do with how discourses are comprehended with reference to separate dialogues. Mikhail Bakhtin (1986), [8] the Russian linguist portrayed this situation as 'dialogism' referencing explicitly or implicitly other discourses which are indicative of the furtherance of social life. Bakhtin (1982, 1984, 1986) [8] states that an author -but also the listener - have their own respective inalienable rights to the word, as well as those whose voices are heard in the word prior to the advent of the author. Dialogism implies that discourses relate to past forms of communication while also foreseeing prospective discursive modes. In dialogism or intertextuality, discourse is located in a web of political, economic and cultural preoccupations. The plethora of discourses functions to compete for one against another for power, dominance and control (Foucault 1980, 79, 90, 92). [9] Within society, specific discourses are more powerful than other discourses; but there is also the power of agency in the reception of discursivity, as agents constitute themselves into subjects via discursive structures. Bakhtin (1984) [8] refers to this variation of discourse as 'heteroglossia', in recognition of the multiple forms of discourse and the means through which some of them succeed in their dominance. This framework enables us to investigate the form, structure and content of online commercial discourse, from the perspective of the ‘grammar’, the wordings, employed in its construction to its reception and interpretation by the wider audience. It facilitates evaluation based upon more than simply the quotations but more especially upon what the commercial discourse is doing and what the digital media is being asked to do in its communicative production, dissemination and consumption.

More specifically, the paper re-thinks the commercial paradigm that underpins online discourse as a structured concept. The context of online racialism is not only structured in its operation but is also (post)structuring in its effects. From this sense, it suggests that traditional ideologies of the offline discourse have an opportunity to integrate into the online best practices of commercial selection. Online commercialism excludes itself from traditional discourse and constitutes itself as a rationalist universe of dispositions and strategies. It has now become a new social space of *habitus*, a practice of reciprocal classification and an exchange of sentiments. Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 2008, 1990, 1996) [10] propounded an anti-thesis theory of rational choice theory by pointing out that rationalist economic action may be foundational but it is susceptible to historical reconstruction. The paper deploys this principle but goes further to show that the Bourdeausian approach is not simply a reformulation of the traditional commercial perspective, nor a simple elaboration of the Blau space, but is also a critical discourse for analyzing digital cyberspace as a meeting point of the economics of technology and the complexification of offline context.

Although the paper exploits online commercialism as a single platform, it is aware that there are different *niches* in the overall digital political economy. Platforms and mobile apps are socially hierarchized, so, it is the intent of this paper to evaluate the structural manifestations between online, offline and mobile commercial selection with the ultimate objective to erase the yawning online/offline artificial distinction that prioritizes technological gadgets only and usher in a relational view of human commercialism that emphasizes the totality of the partner market. In this way, the paper expands the vision of marketing of identities, strategies and preferences beyond the narrow realm of commercialism into the greater relational sphere of dispositions and political economy discursive fields. The Bourdeausian theoretical paradigm enables us to envisage processes of marketization of identities, technology and rationalization as the transformation of the political economy space in which online commercialism is an emanation from and a contributing factor to (post)modernization and rationalization of identities. The technologization of commercialism is therefore not a simple effect of online discourse but a socially evolving process that is embedded in political economy ideologies of the market with openings for the integration of post-modernist, postcolonialist and postMarxist perspectives. From this light, online commercialism cannot be envisioned as a simple technological medium threatening society or as a scientific method for observing facts about humanity but as a *sign* of the re-inforced *nomos* of the political economic domain in the greater field of power. The economic *nomos* manifests itself in terms of the market driven propensities of commercialism and prevailing ways of enquiring into commercialism as the subject's choice. In this way, as a modernization process, online commercialism is not only a narrow process with claims to rationalism being fostered; it is more importantly a process with social and historical implications.

The commercialism paradigm has developed in conjunction with economism to a point where its criteria are now the prevailing paradigm in the conception of online discourse. This paradigm validates the notion of man as being susceptible to racialism principles. The commercialism paradigm is a fertile ground for validating both structure and action in online discourse; however, the paper demonstrates that its method and epistemology are dependent upon social and historical conditions. The discursive field perspective of this paper is focused on both a diachronic genesis and transformation of the commercialism dispositions as effects of various fields on the *habitus* of agents (Calloun 1993). [11] This discursive field traces the impact of the political economic field on the narrative practices of commercialism. But the reconstruction of commercialism is not limited to the economic field; it incorporates the offline cultural field. Discursivity would then stress that the commercialism perspective may align with the digital medium, but this does not mean that commercialism is the only *explanans;* digital commercialism driven by economics is indeed a cultural and historical variable of *explanandum* (Lebaron 2001). [12]

3.0 *Findings*

The late 1980s was marked by the emergence of a global era of a threat to jobs, the absence of efficient regulatory laws for the protection of consumers, resource drain and escalation of digital discrimination,. Black people and women did not get the same deals as white men when purchasing, for example, a new car (Ayres and Siegelman. 1995: 304-321). [13] Experiments were conducted to compare the bids of white/black and male/female buyers negotiating a purchase employing a fixed script. The researchers, revealed disturbing differences in the dealerships, namely, that female/black buyers paid more for the same cars than male/white men did, and black females paid the most on average; so, this was a compelling illustration of how markets can be discriminatory. In the early days of internet commerce, web-based sales of everything, such as cars, did away with racial and gender discrimination. In fact, the first generation of online marketplaces, such as eBay, Amazon and Priceline, made it hard for sellers to discriminate. Transactions were conducted with relative anonymity. A user could negotiate a purchase without providing any identifying information until the seller had agreed to the deal. But increasingly, platforms and users started to know the racial, gender and species (human or canine) character of the dealers, and the internet became a source of discrimination. With identities revealed, groups that were disadvantaged, for example, were confronted with same discriminatory challenges they faced in the off-line world, The problem with early e-commerce was that one side of the market tended to know things the other side did not in terms of its condition, reliability and care with which it was packaged, designed, etc. These challenges were severe for online platforms because it was harder to overcome information asymmetries when the purchaser could not hold a product in their hand and online sellers were new to the business. There were no established brands like Sotheby's and Sears, to give assurance to purchasers that they will not be cheated.

In due course of time, reviews of purchasers and feedbacks enabled e-commerce sellers to build up reputations. Questions of buyers' and sellers' identities, trustworthiness after viewing photographs, looks or even just a name became problematical. The availability of information in some platforms (e.g. Etsy and CustomMade), where potential buyers could see not only products but also the names and photos of sellers, made people more comfortable but, at the same time, facilitated discrimination. In many marketplaces (e.g. AirBNB), a would-be renter searching for listings, saw descriptions and pictures of the property and the host, and the host could also see the names, pictures, etc of potential tenants before either accepting or rejecting them (Edelman et al. 2017: 1-22). [14] Their findings suggest that most of the hosts who declined to process requests from black-sounding profiles had never hosted a black guest and this further suggests that some hosts were especially inclined to discriminate on the basis of race. The problem was so serious that AirBNB commissioned a task force in September 2016 to identify ways to reduce discrimination, and propose changes in policies (Ibid). [14] There was racial discrimination in the labour markets because credit applications to housing were enabled by markers of a race like photographs and by subtler indicators such as names. The use of algorithms and big data counter-intuitively nurtured instead of suppressed discrimination. Search results from engines like Google, the books Amazon suggests, and the movies Netflix recommends, replaced human judgment about what customers wanted but, unfortunately, this did not eliminate human bias. There was a role of race played out in Google ads and records (Sweeney 2011). [15] This does not mean that this was the intentional policy of Google, but rather that the fault was with the algorithm that inadvertently 'decided,' on the basis of past searches, that someone searching, for example, for the name "Deshawn" is more likely than someone searching for the name 'Geoffrey' to click on an arrest-related ad and this demanded changes in Google's algorithmic designing.

The smart market designing of platforms, paradoxically, led to various levels of discrimination because of ambiguities in the decision as to whether and when to post user pictures. Unlike Lyft, Uber did not provide photos of drivers and potential passengers; so, Uber became less susceptible than Lyft to discrimination from drivers. In the same manner, the vacation rental marketplace, HomeAway, which had a search-results page exhibiting pictures only of rent property and host pictures, was withheld until a later page, whereas AirBNB insisted that the host included pictures of themselves on its main search-results page. Companies deployed different methods to investigate discrimination and enforce remedial action. For example, e-Bay employed social psychologists to determine whether male sellers benefitted from higher prices than female ones for the same items and discovered that they do. Although some managers acknowledged that there was discrimination and made efforts to minimize it (e.g. eBay), many businesses preferred to avoid the question completely. So, data from websites were employed in experiments by researchers investigating online discrimination. There was algorithm-generated prejudice to a point where even companies with best intentions could not select the best method to combat discrimination because the current state of the technology did not provide for thinking through the choices made in designing the codes as well as the implications behind their insinuations. Market designers took decisions but there were panoplies of decisions to take; just as companies made differing design choices about varying situations (e.g., whereas Uber did not allow its users to employ its app, Lyft enabled riders to deploy its own), they made varying choices about combating discrimination by placing various premiums to reduce discrimination.

e-Commerce became a profoundly troubling space where the ‘globalization’ metanarrative clashed with ‘state’ and ‘national’ geographies over the question of whether international capitalism should be prioritized over local historical and material conditions or local businesses should be given a chance to grow and compete. The e-commerce rules that the US and other governments took tended to ‘twist’ the business environment in favour of international capital, and did not support localized entrepreneurship such as in India (Soni 2019). [16] For example, Amazon India and Walmart-owned Flipkart were two US-owned companies that catered to three quarter of India’s online retail market. Similarly, when European policymakers held down at Google, Amazon, Apple, and other tech giants with new regulations that attacked what they called ‘unfair practices’ thereby asphyxiating competition by app stores and online market platforms, the reasons advanced were that the regulations were designed to restrain the power of digital platforms by encouraging transparency and fairness between companies and platforms that sell under their names. The regulations besieged app stores like Apple’s App Store and Google Play, e-commerce marketplaces like eBay and Amazon Marketplace, search engines, social media sites working with artists’ Instagram accounts and Facebook Pages as well as price-comparison tools like Kayak and Skyscanner. Europe’s new regulations aimed to ameliorate fairness of practices in online platform marketing and were oriented around the requirement that there should be greater accountability and disclosure, particularly that platforms should establish inner systems of complaint-handling. Nevertheless, even though the claim was that the regulations were designed to restrain what they termed as the anti-competitive practices of big tech companies, critical positions maintained that they were worded in phrases that allowed dominant market companies *off scot-free*. The claims maintained that the rules that were discussed between EU Parliament, EU Council and the EU Commission, and were approved by the EU parliament’s Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, lacked regulatory ‘teeth’ as a requisite condition to arrest practices of *manipulation*. The emphasis on the promotion of transparency of practices was signified as a failure and the case of the 1860s rules targeting railway companies was cited as evidence. They insisted that algorithms cannot be transparent and added that European regulators were either in the ‘bag’ or were naive.

The regulations required internet companies to show whether and how they granted *preferential treatment to their own products and services*, to unveil how search rankings are established, show transparency with companies about policies that concern their capability to sell through the platform, and establish in-house services to handle grievances from vendors with regard to unfair business practices. The intention was to establish an EU Online Platform Economy Observatory to scrutinize competition and other trends. The opposing views were that these regulations did not confront the real problem (Lynn 2005. [17] Consequently, they campaigned for strong implementation of antitrust regulations against big tech platforms and maintained that Facebook, Google and Amazon maneuvered how sellers interacted with buyers of products and manipulated these ways for their own self-centeredness.

Anti-trust practices were envisaged because a number of companies had the good intention to offer buyers the best deals; but according to some views, the companies were prompting merchants to raise their product prices on their marketplace in their websites so that they could become more competitive (Bork 1978; Fine 2000; Tian and Martin 2011; Singh et al. 2005. [18] They maintained that Amazon, for example, scans the prices of rivals like Walmart.com, in order to determine whether they are higher or lower. When a product was of a lower price, it drew the attention of the seller of the item, who then used algorithms to make the product more difficult to find and purchase on its own marketplace. It was argued that this anti-trust practice penalized the seller on the platform and caused him to opt for a *price rise* instead of risking the loss of sales on Amazon. But critical positions held that Amazon derived power by mining buyers’ sales data in order to launch products on a competitive basis and make targeted products more difficult to trace out on its marketplace. The position also added that prompted buyers to consider a rise in the prices of their products and was consistent with the classical definition of antitrust behavior. Monopolization was charged on eBay Inc. Amazon, and Walmart Inc., for removing products with what was seen as “highly uncompetitive” prices in comparison with prices on other marketplace sites through pricing alerts. In addition to higher product prices that were rendered ineligible as offer on the product detail page, because they were priced higher on Amazon than in other sites, advertising was also included for higher pricing. In this way, buyers lost the power to use the "buy now" button and this hurt sale as algorithms 'decided' which products buyers could see as they were buried on the site. Amazon 's price alert policy was, however, eliminated for European sellers in 2013 and after a Democratic presidential hopeful threatened to disintegrate big tech companies, while some scholars suggested regulation as a way out (Shughart and Thomas 2013, Khan 2016). [19]

The ineffectivity of regulations was noticed because a number of measures were applied or state regulations were contemplated for implementation, but in practice, they were not impactful. Steps were taken to ban e-commerce firms from selling products owned by businesses in which they had equity interest. e-Commerce platforms were also required not to enter into private accords with sellers. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry through its Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) released Press Note No. 3 (2016 series) on 29 March, 2016 with guidelines for a hundred percent Foreign Direct Investment in e-commerce (Ibid). It stated that a hundred percent FDI could be applied within the automatic approval category on condition that the marketplace and not the inventory model was enforced. The inventory model allowed the platform to purchase products directly, assume complete responsibility for the products sold out and was charged with ensuring the buyer did not worry about quality and quantity questions with the anonymous seller in the online platform. The inventory model was implemented by the Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba. Amazon Flipkart in India and Wal-Mart were supposed to apply the marketplace model, but in reality they enforced the inventory model as a way of evading quality/product accountability, transferring the kick to the anonymous seller through its platform and incestuously promoting its own products (Ibid). The inventory model enabled the e-commerce portal to sell products in which it had stakes so that it could generate more funds in the light of products in which it had no equity stakes. By enforcing what was seen as an 'incestuous' practice, products became *costlier for the purchaser*, who in offline stores, *went out of business*. Enterprises had to sell via e-commerce portals but they lost out to competitors endorsed by the e-commerce portals through equity stakes and so forth.

Under the marketplace model, the e-commerce portal was barred from a seller selling more than twenty five percent of its total sales. The platform's function was to facilitate prospects for sellers without marketing wherewithal to attain buyers; it was barred from either influencing prices or controlling the inventory. But in spite of these 2016 guidelines, the state failed to verify 'incest', namely, the sale of the platform's own products and the requirement of twenty five percent maximum value did not intimidate the platforms because they 'floated' many associate and secondary businesses (e.g. Amazon manages Cloudtail India; Flipkart and Omnitech Retail /RetailNet). The new rule that went applicable on 1 February 2019 ended 'incestuous' deals by the proscription of a percentage of a platform's and firm;s products in which the platform had stakes. In this way, while the abuse was seriously going on, the state had to tolerate it for as long as the abuse did not cross the twenty five percent maximum. With the DIPP circular note dated 26 December 2018 emphasizing twenty five percent maximum for sellers' products in which the platform had no stakes, the complete ban on sale of sellers' products in which platform had not got any direct/indirect stake and with the 1 February 2019 note banning *de rigueur* payments from flashing sales in Flipkart and Amazon platforms lasting for a short duration, it was felt that this was a ridicule policy set up on the marketplace because the ban was on exclusive sale and not on flash sales *per se*. So, this did not stop the latest version of a mobile phone from being flash sold on Flipkart or Amazon.

In order to track out conformity, a new compliance procedure was introduced in India by which the platform was required to deliver both a report of statutory auditor to the Indian Reserve Bank and a certificate attesting conformity with the guidelines by 30 September each preceding financial year, in order to ensure that the Bank was aware of the compliance extent of e-commerce platforms swearing to implement the marketplace model. These reforms came after the 2018 Consumer Protection Bill that was enacted by the Lok Sabha aimed at disciplining online sales and providing a fair field for offline and online stores. India modified a proposed e-commerce regulation after an initial draft, which gestured toward enhancing the conditions of domestic startups in the country. The reforms were supposed to stiffen restrictions on global giants and bolster local startups like digital payments provider Paytm when concerns were raised that it should consider foreign investment in specific areas and the requirement that Indian consumer data should be documented at the national level (Patri and Venkataraman 2018). [20] The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) opposed the discounts provided by e-commerce giants, namely, Amazon and Flipkart, by arguing that it created an *uneven playing field* between the sellers who sell online and offline. Online marketplaces, however, argued that they were instead enabling the small sellers to scale up by bringing them online.

3.1 *The case for an expanded network model*

In the previous review section, we investigated *what* forms of devastation the Web and Internet infrastructures of the e-commerce marketplace inflicted on the Third World and its diaspora and came to the proposition that they constructed a centre/periphery global geography where nation states of the North dominated nation states of the South and this reality constructed a political economy of despair. In this section, we propose to discuss the reasons *why* the Web and the Internet revolution that the world was looking up to, was susceptible to such a power crisis through its neoliberal practices of e-commerce. It asks *why* this revolutionary sign of digital capitalism failed to emancipate the Third World and others from poverty and precipitated their marginalization. Essentially, we will maintain that the cause of this political economy despair and decline was not the Web, the Internet itself nor the e-commerce marketplace, but rather the *narrow use* that was made of these technologies. As we have seen, whether from the viewpoint of discrimination, loss of job opportunities, anti-trust laws, price rise, costs, level playing field, or flashsales, the central issue foregrounded was the *status* of Web and Internet infrastructures of the e-commerce marketplace. This section demonstrates that such a technologically deterministic model of the e-commerce marketplace was counterproductive as shown above,

In order to address this hypothesis, we start off with the argumentation that there was a serious problematic with how the Web and Internet infrastructure of the e-commerce marketplace was *perceived*. The technology was envisaged very narrowly in the past as a mere instrument of communication instead of broadening out the idea beyond technology. The technology of e-commerce was instrumentalized as a mere question of ordering of products from an on-line catalogue, that is, the employment of computer networks to ameliorate the performance of an organization, increase its profit, grow its market share, ameliorate its services rendered to customers, and convey its goods and services to its clients at faster rates than before. This very limited view of the e-commerce technology failed to consider that, in addition to ordering of goods, organizational performance and profit, there are other issues that must be factored in such as the *interactions* that an organization carries out electronically with its stakeholders, namely, the people in whose hands the future of the organization is contingent. From this light, it is critical that web pages should stimulate relationships with prospective investors such as government regulators, employees, financial institutions, students, suppliers, consumers, managers, employees, the public, etc. The e-commerce marketplace organization talks only of an Internet presence, but what is often absent is the *extent* of their involvement in terms of the number of existing or potential consumers who are likely to be the Internet users of the online marketplace, the costs of searching for products/services in the website, the potential consumers, who may move to the websites of competitors with web presence, the information intensity of goods and services, etc. The intensity of information for a product would require not only 'text' to a list item, but also graphics and photos for display, sound for sampling, animations, cartoons, video clips and so on. The multimedia can be productive in providing intensive details for such a model

The reasons for deploying the internet in this model are not limited to just profit-making, but extend to environmental challenges that have to do with the risk of demand contrition, risk of innovation disruption and risk of inadequacy. Deployment of the Web and the Internet in this model is aimed at minimizing these risks as was the case in the Dot.com crisis of 2008. The demand for products or services can suddenly change as in 2008 when demand for products and services changed drastically and the US market collapsed thereby posing as a serious risk to many online marketplaces across the world (e.g. Smith-Corona, a U.S. producer of typewriters, went bankrupt in 1995, when typewriters were replaced by computers). With globalization, competition and deregulation, the Web and the Internet can play the role of rendering the online marketplace adaptive and flexible, while they are in a quest for new products and services, new markets and are in a search to stimulate demand for them. The Web should become a strategy, a mechanism of penetration, where products are not only sold, but can be seen in an electronic, full-colour catalogue, with legal implications of products or services explained, insurance openings referenced, options for credit card details, order form to be filled in, greeting card options, delivery facilitation options, and so forth. This strategy, which is being partially applied by the U.K. supermarket grouping Tesco, does not only signify support to a marketplace to augment its margins on products and services, but also signify development of new markets, easing of product distribution, tapping into global markets by reaching out and communicating with stakeholders who are enthusiastic about a particular niche. Lastly, the technology connotes with cost effectiveness, the irrelevance of time and geographical distance, etc. This model also connotes with possibilities of constructing a one-to-one interactive and customized niche between buyers and sellers tailored to a particular banking service (e.g. Bank of America is open to such an option), customization of learning for visitor experience in terms of creation of virtual communities, music desired, (e.g. the Firefly software). Web presence signifies facilitation of product and service development in the light of consumer profile and in terms of excitement, newness, alternative offerings, time sensitivity with hourly updates on events (e.g. the U.K. Sporting Life newspaper) delivering new products to new markets such as providing online facilitation for buying of annuities, mutual funds and equities (e.g. American Express Direct).

In a context of saturation of supply of products and services and the sophistication of consumers who are now very selective in their choices, the Web should correspond to the ideas of newness, difference, adaptation and innovation in order to avoid stagnation and the prospect of demise. The Web should connote with competition and market share, the employment of internet tools like bulletin boards, e-mail and discussion groups to facilitate requests for changes in products or new service features, open communication links with a broad range of consumers and screen out what statements consumers are making about the products/services of an e-commerce marketplace and its competitors. It should signify the lowering of costs through the use of interactive forms of communication to capture consumer order details and data and through the distribution of online information. This can take the form of frequent flyer updates (e.g. American Airlines), the employment of frequently asked questions (FAQs), UPS, and so forth to detail new questions about the origin of the e-commerce marketplace, its history, current functions, prospective potentials and so on. The technology connotes with the reformulation of the classical modes of doing business based on brokers and dealers, namely, disintermediation. Web-based guides, linking of producers and consumers (e.g. the Autobytel Web site), insights, value chain networks with information flows that are bi-directional with multiple inputs.

The Web signifies the development of new themes, metaphors, models and examples to portray changes in the business. The Internet should play the role of articulating 'metaphors' like Joseph Schumpeter's idea of 'creative destruction', that is, the creation of new opportunities and industries that are destructive of old ways of doing things and old technologies as evidenced by Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble (Schumpeter 1942: 82-85). [21] Thus, beyond ICTs, the technology should be used to articulate new models (e.g. hybridized by amalgamating traditional and Web business strategies), new comportments (e.g., virtual communities, chat rooms, etc), new consumer practices (e.g., searches for online information), to showcase its robustness, reliability and organizational values, highlight the life quality of consumers, display prospects for the future, new ways of corresponding with stakeholders and gauging communication efficiency. Web site strategies and Web pages are not simply technologies to be regulated but present with multiple network advantages, namely, time compression of business cycles, speed in information transfer and economic transactions, the power of networking, multi-disciplinary perspectives such as management information systems, marketing, marketing research, and communication, business strategy, and so on. They denote new forms of human interactions enhanced through virtual communities, chat rooms, brand communities (e.g., a Web page for cattle owners), online town hall meetings, new marketing strategies for promotion, pricing and distribution of products and services.

Beyond these potentials of ICTs in the e-commerce marketplace, there is also the potential to change human activities and comportments such as e-mail exchanges (e.g., word-of-mouth communications about products and services, e-mail messages conveyed directly to organizations), virtual communities, direct Web consumer purchases such as the purchase of software, compact disks, flowers, etc, big data collection, the affiliation and congregation of organizations around new consumer groups to address problems and provide consumer services in new ways through chat rooms in which problem is raised and answers are given. The digital marketplace indicates a change from one organizational model to another organizational value, which may take the form of knowledge (e.g., U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel and Microsoft or Amazon.com. The value may also take the form of product and service enhancement, favourable prices through increased competition, improved communications, The e-commerce platform is not only about the medium of intranets, technology and extranets, but it is also more importantly about networking strategically.

4.0 *Discussion: Corrosive contexts of capitalist ideologies in nation states*

In the preceding section, we started off by showing *why* the capitalist ideology of digital commerce and its marketplace infrastructures devastated the political economy of Third World nation states and even went through a crunch in 2008 despite the huge potentials it possessed for emancipating society. We ended up the section by demonstrating that the problematic that caused this despair was not the ICTs themselves and the online commercial platform but rather the narrow way they were used. We moved on to illustrate how their employment could be broadened out. In this section, we hypothesize that the capitalist metanarrative of the e-commerce marketplace is not created in a vacuum, but is constructed by the political economy environment of nation states. So, drawing insights from continental literature, we will attempt to answer the question as to how the nation state political economy interacted with the capitalist technology to construct despair?

The continental literature instructs us that neoliberalism is a Janus-headed ideology of radical economic liberalism, based on the ‘minimal state’ and ‘self-regulated markets’. The ‘minimal state’ poses a serious problematic not as an economic but as a political concept of liberal conquest. Neoliberalism comes from liberalism. In the Eighteenth century, liberalism was the ideology of the bourgeois middle class fighting against the landowner's oligarchy of despotic states. So, as a reactionary ideology, neoliberalism was a radical type of economic liberalism, in the same manner as in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, liberal radicalism was revolutionary. Historically, neoliberalism is an ideology that the affluent employed in the late Twentieth century against the social democratic state and the proletarian class of workers. As a reactionary ideology, it was strengthened by the neoclassical economic theory of rationalist expectations, the new institutionalism, public choice theory and the radical rationalist choice School, that assailed the state and against the regulation of markets. Consequently, economic growth rates were minimized and this led to increased economic and financial instability as wealth become concentrated in the hands of about 1% of the population. African and developing nation states that enforced what has been called the Washington consensus, growth rates and levels of development were so low that they started to enter a trajectory of despair.

The literary narratives show that state and capitalist markets have been complementary institutions in Africa with extremely catastrophic outcomes. The metanarrative of the neoliberal market generated ambiguous functions and placements depending upon the text being investigated. In many African text narratives, such as Ngugi’s (2018) *Petals of Blood*, [22] Pepetela’s *Mayombe*, (Rothwell 2002: 121-128) and Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, (Bhat 2014: 17-21), [23] the state is the major organization managing modern societies; it is the constitutional system and the organization that legitimates it. The state is the main apparatus through which democracy is deployed to change the course of capitalism and achieve political objectives. In the texts, the capitalist market that embodies the whole system into which e-commerce platforms are embedded is a competition-based institution that the state regulates in order to coordinate the economy. When liberalism emerged in the Eighteenth century to fight the repressive state apparatus in Europe, colonial imperialism was ongoing in Africa through the eyes of Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (Moore 2004) [25]. Neoliberalism, which is a renewal of economic liberalism, became a dominant thematic in the 1980s and started to escalate a political assault on the state in defence of the market as evidenced in Tah Asongwed's (2009) *Born to Rule*. [26] But eventually, neoliberalism also assailed the market as a meta-ideology to give a "scientific" allure to the assault.

As Alfredo and Johnston (1993: 100), [27] Fraser (2014: 541-558) [27] and Sternberg (1993) [27] show, the notion of a self-adjustable market implied that market conditions could bring about a utopia. But as discussed above, the market did not bring about the ideal political economy for Third World nation states. The market institution existed by annihilating the human, moral, cultural and the natural substance of nations. As Polanyi and MacIver have explained in *The Great Transformation*, [28] the capitalist economy physically demolishes man and changes his environment into a wilderness. In the 1980s and 1990s, neoliberalism was nurtured into a hegemonic ideology with its programme being legitimated and naturalized. In these years, this transformed into an opposition between the marketplace and the state, whereas this neoliberal agenda placed these two institutions in a complementary structure in modern society. Initially, from the 1960s, the state, as portrayed in Aluko's *A State of Our Own*, [29] was the constitutional-legal system that certified law and order; it presented itself as the basic institution of every nation, the template of all other institutions, an organization that has regulatory power over nations, and as the political apparatus by which it is constantly implemented and adjusted. For example, national actions were synchronized by law and the judicial system, and the public administration served to guarantee this synchronization. The market is signified in the text as a distant reality that occasionally manifests through entrepreneurial brick and mortar activities such as shops, stores, street hawking, etc. But the economic competition here is quite limited and is heavily regulated by the state through the imposition of taxes, and other economic actions. The capitalist institution complemented the broader political coordination carried out by the state. Therefore, it made no sense to oppose the state and market at this stage of Africa's modernist but very fragile history. But the author acknowledges problems in the state, in the sense that certain activities might be better coordinated if the state limited its regulation of the market, but we would be wrong to see both forms of coordination as alternatives, because the state will always regulate markets and because ultimate responsibility for good or bad coordination will not be heaped on the doorsteps of the market, which has no will of its own, but society's through its distinct forms of political organization such as civil society or nation.

Modern nations are capitalist societies that organize their territory in sovereign countries or nation-States. Today, within the framework of global capitalism, empires and areas previously occupied by tribes and clans have disappeared, and the entire planet is covered with nation-States that compose a broader and evolving world political system. As countries have opened their markets to international trade, globalization has transformed the world into a great marketplace – into one large and increasingly integrated economic system, where the political-territorial unit is the nation-State, comprising a nation (or civil society), a State and a territory. A country that is developed in the economic, social and political realms is a nation well served by a strong State capable of regulating a free and efficient market. The State and the market are, therefore, institutions of society – its instruments of collective action and the main tools for each society to achieve its goals. The primary instrument is the State; the market, socially constructed and politically regulated, is its complement. The stronger one institution is, the stronger the other will be.

From the 1980s, the power of the market increased and that of the state was weakened. This was because the neoliberal *ideology* of capitalism began an 'irrational' onslaught to displace the state from control. Neoliberalism schemed a veritable assault, first, on the US New Deal state's democratic and social structures that were established by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and strengthened in the post-WWII Europe; second, and later, on the democratic states that emerged in African nation states. But, by so doing, the market also came under assault, because, in the absence of state regulation, it ceased to carry out its economic functions in society and become demoralized. Other neoliberal strands were positioned to argue that this dominant ideology of capitalism did not seek to minimize the state, but rather to remove it from the sphere of productivity. They required the state to cease to play the role of "producer" with its marketing boards, five or ten years' development programmes, agricultural revolution programmes, etc, and become a "regulator" of these programmes. But this discourse was classical Orwellian doublespeak in the sense that what the strand stated was the opposite of what they actually meant. The basic role of the state was regulation, namely, defining and imposing itself as the constitutional-legal system. But, the this role of the state gave 'birth' to another role, namely, that of an enabler, a protector, and an inducer in the initial phases of economic development.

The neoliberal philosophy rejected the role of the state as enabler, protector and inducer which consisted of promoting entrepreneurship, startups, and incubations. The name "regulatory state" became ambiguous because its role became susceptible to multiple significations, namely, 'regulation' and 'deregulation'. On the one hand, neoliberalism envisaged the state as a "minimal" organization, namely, as a safety net, a protective system to remedy the 'blindness' of the market in terms of provision of, for example, social services, justice, etc; relinquishing role of leadership of national development and inducer of strategies of productive investment and technological or scientific development, and, lastly, in terms of de-regulation of the financial markets, assumed to be self-regulating. So, the neoliberal creed was the *deregulation* of the marketplace. So, the ambiguity between 'regulatory state' and 'deregulatory state' in western and developing nation states opened the floor to conflict between the economic elites. From the 1980s to the early 2000s, neoliberalism became the hegemonic ideology that was adopted and promoted by US, German and UK governments with Ronald Reagan, Helmut Kohl and Margaret Thatcher. However, from 2008, the intrinsic irrationalities of neoliberalism and its failure to promote economic growth in developing nation states as well as its efficiency which focused revenues about 2% of the population or society that adopted its ideology and the increasing macroeconomic instabilities (as evidenced by the various financial crises from the 1990s) had become clear indications of neoliberalism's exhaustion. In October 2008 in the US, there was a crash and an ongoing financial crisis, which suggested the limitations of the ideology and the government of Barack Obama was compelled to intervene to rescue companies, banks and families that had been indebted or gone bankrupt. Although the state was called upon to save the market, this did not necessarily mean the end of its hegemony. Today, neoliberalism is a much disparaged ideology because of the nefarious consequences it imposed on societies it victimized.

Fukuyama's (2004) [30] vigorously censured the neoliberal philosophy enforced by the US on developing nation states, especially in Africa by demonstrating how the policy failed these nation states. African nation-states were portrayed as 'failed' states, 'borderline' cases, that can enable us to illuminate the ambiguous situations reigning in them. The state in Africa has been a construction of the institutionalist ideology of modernist societies. It was Hegel who proposed the idea that statehood is the ultimate crystallization of reason, and therefore of statehood as an endeavor of human rationalism. Although the African state is being projected today in narratives such as Asongwed's *Born To Rule*, and Kamau and Cameron's (1979) *Lust to Kill: The Rise and Fall of Idi Amin*, [31] as an 'imperfect' institution that deviates from the Eurocentric Westphalian normativity in terms of its appropriation by an indigenous neopatrimonial class, the state in the continent is represented in the narratives as always going through various reforms of their constitutional-legal system. The state here is an organizational apparatus staffed by public servants stuffed with managerial but as well as with problems immorality represented by figures like chief Nanga in Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Hence, these are disparities between design and reality that do not necessarily disavow statehood as the pursuit of rationality as well as a construct of human will. So, the African state embeds the ambiguities of both economy and society, freedom and human will, interest and cooperation, but without any specific goals nor collective choices. In this scenario of ambiguity, individuals are guided by *their* reason and self-interest. The challenge for the African state has been its perversion of determinism.

Determinism is a doctrine that was derived from the natural sciences, but it lured capitalism because it transformed the ideology of neoliberal capitalism into a 'science' with suggestions of precision, naturalism and potential to provide accurate explanations. However, in reality, the capitalist market can only be rendered into a deterministic entity by radically simplifying the behavior of humans as rational. This approach can be intrinsically misleading in so far as human beings embed elements of unpredictability and freedom. Social behavior is not simplistically the totalizing effect of individual behaviours. Society brings people together under rationalist reasons; however, people share beliefs and values that transform their patterns of social behaviour. The rationality that brings people together is incarnated by the state's constitutional-legal system; but as Karl Polanyi (1944) [28] argues, economic liberalism does not represent the history of the Industrial Revolution because it evaluates social events in terms of the viewpoint of economics instead of in the light of the spontaneity of social transformation and the basic truths of statecraft and political science. Thus, beyond selfish interests, there is the regulation of the nation state and the economy, when individuals concentrate on the common good and transform their fate for the better of the general. There is progress and there is cynicism, pessimism, freedom, necessity, fairness and environmentalism. At one end, there is the welfare state or social capitalism (e.g. in Scandinavia). On the other end, there is the state as juridical order, reason and liberty. But this state is very imperfectly 'instrumental' because it is perceived as belonging to some people, rather than to everyone as Rousseau theorized in his general will and the social contract (Rousseau 2018, Rousseau 2012, Baker 2012., Rosenblatt 2007.). [32] The challenge comes from the "we" that is represented as an incarnation of the state that deploys the imperfect instrument to attain collective goals. This can be explained from the light of Marx and Engels, who claimed in the *Communist Manifesto*, that the state was the bourgeoisie executive committee, that was detached from it. They denied that the state was capable of being rational and legitimate. However, they were referring to the 'state' of their historical time that was liberal and authoritarian, in the sense that it was upholding the right to individual freedom while denying political signs of welfare such as voting, electioneering and government participation. In Africa, nationhood and civil society remained in the authoritarian of the emerging bourgeoisie and the alienating aristocracy of chiefs, Fons, Sultans, Lamidos and Ardos.

However, during the decolonization epoch when the nation state was being constructed, the bourgeoisie allied with the workers and proletarian class because this was a precondition for independence. In the 1960s, the workers and proletarian class knew that the state would become their legitimate instrument of collective action, democracy, constitutionalism and participation. But, unlike in western countries, the state in Africa failed to articulate its social and democratic roles because capital was impacting negatively on their economies, as we have pointed out poverty was on the rise, civil society was almost absent, political inequality increased and the workers' voice became less audible. In the pre-modern past, the national communities regulated markets because of the alliance that existed between the landowning, royalty and commoner classes (Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*). The 'liberal' state (compared to chieftaincy rule) came later in 1884 with the advent of imperialism and colonial rule because the commoner class allied with the bourgeoisie that brought colonial rule and the state. The commoners were content with the colonial state from the beginning because it assured them their civil rights, political participation, and freedom. But after the First and Second World Wars, the commoners, now turned working class, understood that they have to appropriate the state as means of capitalist production and participation, subject the pre-capitalistic elites of chieftaincy rule, for whom democracy was unthinkable, and ally with the bourgeois elite of the former colonial power. But no sooner after independence did they come to realize that the role of the state is not only to regulate the capitalist market (from the 1960s to 1980s), but also that it has to adopt a 'minimalist' role (from the 1980s), and therefore, it is pointless to oppose the state to the market. The neoliberal ideology re-invented this opposition in order to minimize the emergent state that had transmogrified into a social democratic welfare organization and dialectize capitalism into neoliberal capitalism.

Compared to the state, the market is a more modest institution that is competition-driven and does not require any prior definition of objectives or goals in the sense that standards are defined in the course of the competitive process itself by competitors. In addition, the market does not require any administrative power or authority to define its objectives and goals and to establish its methods. The marvel of the market is that each individual, company or competitor makes decisions in ways that are autonomous. Without such an independence in decision-making, it would be virtually impossible to synchronize the complex economic systems that capitalism generated. Through price competition, capitalism carries out the distribution of its material and human resources. As a result of its tendency to even out profit rates, the market enables allotment of the factors of production to a point to a point where if capital, labour or knowledge is lower than demand in a certain industry, prices increase; but, with factors of production being redirected to gratify this greater demand, prices and remuneration of these factors return to a state of equilibrium. Economic freedom, technology and capitalism can only be crucial for the development of complex societies, if they are synchronized by the market. In the early phases of economic development in the 1960s, state intervention in Africa was necessary to compel primitive accumulation of capital or savings for the industrial and capitalist revolution. Although the leaders of these states such as Kwame Nkrumah in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* [33] thought that they were making a socialist revolution; in reality, they were implementing the first phase(s) of the capitalist revolution in the continent. Compared with the US, the Soviet Union was less successful in enforcing the capitalist revolution during competition because its state-run regime that was efficient in driving savings for economic infrastructure, was incapable of effecting a more advanced phase of economic development. Latin American nation states as a whole used the state to put in place their economic infrastructure, but soon opened up to market forces. So, it is clear that this institution is inefficient when it comes to managing capitalism because it is insensitive to basic human and political values such as justice, freedom, environmental protection, and efficiency. Nevertheless, the state is necessary to coordinate the market, and the evidence of this is that during times of crisis, the market becomes ineffective. Although the economic crisis is basically a failure of the market, which is a realm of necessity and not of freedom, the market may start to disseminate disorder when the state fails to provide the requisite freedom for its growth.

Economic theory deals with the science of the marketplace as regulated by the state. This is why in the political economy, a market cannot survive without the regulations and guarantees of the state. But economists like Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus were tempted to declare their independence from the state because the mercantilist state was autocratic and distorted the economic system. But with the emergence of the bourgeoisie, economic theory was associated with liberalism because freedom was needed for more market undertakings. These classical economists, nevertheless, comprehended that their theory was not strictly economic, but was also political; that politics and statehood are not necessarily a hindrance to the market (as neoliberalism claimed later), but is an essential part of the market system since it regulates and guarantees the market. Since the market as a system producing goods and services is competition-driven, it is a mechanism that is managed as a hierarchical system in a bureaucratic organization called a company or firm. So, it defines its objectives and selects the most suitable methods to achieve them by coordinating individuals, agents, families and economic organizations for profit as well as for better wages and salaries for workers and professionals. The state has the responsibility to coordinate them by planning and sometimes to intervene in the production process of products and services. But it also has the option of regulating society through laws, constitutions, policies and the institutionalization and regulation of the market.

There was a coalition between market professionals and the neoliberal ideology in the west that transformed financing into 'financialization', that is, into the process of creating 'fictitious' wealth and its appropriation. With the basic relationship of hierarchy and complementarity established between both the state and the market, various theories (neoclassical economic theory, public choice, new institutionalism, etc) provided instruments for the assault of the neoliberal ideology against the state) and this legitimated a distortion in the development of the capitalist market. For example, in the 1950s, neoliberal intellectuals such as Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Karl Popper and Milton Friedman, who were struggling against communism that intended to replace capitalism with socialism and the market with state planning, led to various misunderstandings, disputes and challenges between liberalism and socialism. While it became clear that there was no alternative form of organizing production beyond the capitalist market, but, at the same time, it was also clear that in Africa, the capitalist market may evolve into a social capitalism if the labour class of old managed to ally with the bourgeois class to establish welfare states as was the case during the 1960s to the 1980s. Whereas in the 1960s, neoliberalism emerged with full strength in the US institutions of economic science (through neoclassical economic theory, the new institutionalism based on transaction costs, the theory of public choice and the theory of rational choice), in order to reduce politics to no more than a market, it was only from the 1980s that neoliberalism came as a reductionist view of the state and of politics itself. Neoclassical economic theory demonstrated that the state's regulatory actions of old were not needed, and the new institutionalism transformed the state into a market, the theory of public choice transformed the state into a corrupt organization while rational choice reduced politics to profits and losses in the marketplace. The writers show that US economists failed to separate the market from ideology clearly. Neoclassical economists, for example, changed the name of economic science from "political economy" to simply "economics", thereby consummating the distinction between the economy and politics, and between the market and ideology.

In the writings of e-commerce, economics was turned into a "pure science" and transmogrified into mere ideology. With this shift, the market attained a sensible degree of independence from the rest of society and became a science in its own right. And, yet, writers in Africa argued that this did not justify a "pure" economic theory and maintained that the market was ideological because it aspired to become a 'purity', which concealed the political element embedded in it given that the market was rendered autonomous by capitalism. Although Alfred Marshall, was a neoclassical scholar, his microeconomic investigations of the market gestured toward the model of general equilibrium, the subjective theory of value, and this was a real plunge into ideology's trappings. In the latter half of the 20th century, after the emergence of Keynesian macroeconomics and of development economics, this insanity was temporarily halted. Not by chance, Keynesian macroeconomics and development economics was dominant between 1945 and 1975, In the 1970s, however, the slackening of the developed economies, the falling interest rates and the stagflation phenomenon became a golden opportunity for neoliberalism to mount its assault on the socialist state and for neoclassical economic theory to recover its dominant mainstream position. With its macroeconomic and mathematical growth models based on rational expectations, neoclassical economic theory was once again capable of "demonstrating mathematically" the self-regulatory nature of the markets – a trait liable to be hampered only by some very surmountable market flaws. Milton Friedman and Robert Lucas provided a financial theory that posited that markets are intrinsically efficient and independent both from the State and from the individual decisions of financial managers. As Pierre Bourdieu observed, this separation involved an "ethical revolution" through which the sphere of commercial trade was sundered from the other realms of life and transactions (Svendsen 2001).

5.0 *Conclusion*

In spite of the negative appraisal of the roles of the big giants in the global economy, constructing a centre/periphery continuum where nation states of the North/South belong respectively and a political economy of despair has emerged, e-commerce platforms such as Flipkart, Amazon, eBay, etc, have understood that it is for their own very best interest that the South should develop and have begun to facilitate growth of the IT ecosystem, by creating income opportunities, new communication infrastructure, pushing for the adoption of technology, improving skills and sponsoring MSMEs, entrepreneurs, brands, small sellers, and artisans so that they can access the online marketplace for their products. They have enabled local undertakings to expand beyond their limited geographies into unconnected areas. By so doing they created the momentum for the development of retail, manufacturing and supply chain industries. By empowering Indian grass-roots initiatives, and facilitating their access to technology, finance and training, they create new insights and values for their own products, artifacts, accessories and clothes such as *pithora* paintings, *gond* and *phulkari art* and so forth. Buyers were not the only factor considered by the platforms; sellers or entrepreneurs and startups, were supported by Flipkart's finance program and Amazon's Launchpad, etc so that they could afford digital advertisements, hyperlocal logistics, tech innovations like digital payments, account management solutions, and buyer engagements. Amazon endorsed state cooperatives to create email and GST accounts, set up cluster development activities, through the *Kaarigar* programme. Flipkart commenced the *Samarth* project with weavers, artisans, craftsmen in order to democratize the online marketplace by representing marginalized sectors and building a pan-India buyer base.

Nevertheless, because indigenous sellers, who were afraid that they may incur profit losses, and found it hard to trust the platforms adopted Snapdeal, a ‘Pay per Transaction’ model in which buyers paid only when they had completed an order successfully prompted by the advertisement. The state may not play the maximal role African states tries to enforce in the past in their economies, but the final statement will be made by nations that have embraced capitalism.

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Sketch Bio

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