

THE DUAL LOGIC OF CHINESE TRANSNATIONALISM

BY JINGWEN JIANG

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School of Government
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the organizational culture and global human resources strategy of Chinese multinational enterprises, and how these reflect the governmental context of their country of origin. This research therefore seeks to link the disciplines of human resource management, organizational behaviour and public policy. In China, the political leadership has in recent years expanded its influence and control over the corporate sector. This topic is addressed via an in-depth case study of Lenovo, a company once seen to symbolise China's embrace of globalisation, and now adapting to a different political context to that in which it was founded and expanded. Therefore, the research rationale is to assess how far did Lenovo move from its previous culture and strategy under to political pressure. The starting point of the research is the notion of hybridity, that competing values underly the development of Chinese multinationals such as Lenovo, between global and national, market and hierarchy, and proposes a theoretical framework in which a hybrid culture emerges through the interaction of competing principles. A hybrid perspective suggests that the image of Lenovo as a transnational organization derived from its high-profile acquisition of the IBM personal computer (PC) business, but that this was only one side of the Lenovo culture, the other being its role as a key supplier to the Chinese public sector.

The research question is therefore to what extent does Lenovo have a hybrid culture? As human resources strategy was central to Lenovo's transnational mission, the research question is pursued through two sub-questions:

RQ 1: What is Lenovo's HR strategy?

RQ 2: To what extent is Lenovo's HR strategy transnational?

Fieldwork consisted of a three-month participative observation and 11 follow-up interviews in the global HR headquarters of Lenovo in Beijing. The results of the empirical study showed the evolving HR strategy of Lenovo goes as ambiguous and hybrid, on the one hand showing the extent to which State influence has rolled back the global or transnational principle that had once been seen as synonymous with Lenovo, but also showing the extent to which elements of the earlier transnational or global culture remain. The research contributes to the dual identity of the Chinese corporate sector as the State's approach to globalisation changes.

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Abbreviations

A	
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Communist Party of China
CDO	Chief Diversity Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMNE	Chinese Multinational Enterprise
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EMEA	Europe, Middle East, and Africa
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
IT	Information Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
M&A	Merger and Acquisition
MNE	Multinational Enterprise
OC	Organizational Culture
OD	Organizational Development
ODI	Outward Direct Investment
OS	Organizational Structure
OTM	Organization and Talent Management
PC	Personal Computer
PRC	People's Republic of China
R&D	Research and Development
SHRM	Strategic HRM
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise

Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This research was started in 2019 and was motivated by the experience of studying the organisational culture (OC) of Huawei for my Master's dissertation. I became interested in the attributes, such as Huawei's 'wolf warrior' culture, of the OC of Chinese multinational enterprise (CMNE). Another factor in the choice of this research was the trade war between the United State and China that took place in 2018 (Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal, 2022). For the Chinese market circumstance, the trade war was not only a serious blow to the economy, but also a shock to the labour market and to the corporate sector that were invested in ever increasing globalisation and openness (Li, He and Lin, 2018; Liu and Woo, 2018; Lau, 2019; Itakura, 2020). Especially, with the imposition of strict sanctions on Huawei, there was a shift in the way the Chinese corporate sectors were regarded (Schmiege, 2019). Now CMNEs are seen as extensions of the State rather than transnational players, and seen as enjoying 'government-created advantages' (Luo, Xue and Han, 2010; Li *et al.*, 2013; Nölke, 2014b; Ramamurti and Hillemann, 2018; Blanchette, 2020; Li, 2021). This has led to a heightened interest in studying CMNEs' strategic development and HR strategies abroad, where are these still converging with international practices and becoming transnational or are they taking a different path?

The initial idea of this research was to do a comparative study between Huawei and Lenovo since founded in the same period with similar products and services. Given that Huawei is often regarded as close to the State and reflecting an assertive national culture, it is useful to study Lenovo's international development and HR strategies in an implied comparison with Huawei. As perhaps the most 'Western' major Chinese firm, duo to its acquisition of IBM PC business,

Lenovo might be expected to experience more cultural discomfort than most as China's engagement with globalisation has shifted. Moreover, many studies have been discussed the challenges, successful and human resource management (HRM) integration of cross-border acquisition by Chinese enterprise (Ying Liu, Pheng Low and Niu, 2011; Li, Li and Wang, 2016; Schweizer, Walker and Zhang, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2020; Liu and Meyer, 2020; Tarba *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021a; Wang, Schweizer and Michaelis, 2021; Ahmed, Khan and Khan, 2022; Hu, Gunessee and Liu, 2022; Xie *et al.*, 2022). In the case of Lenovo there is the additional interest of the cultural consequences of an overseas merger and acquisition, both in terms of how a Western firm could be absorbed into the culture of a CMNE but also how the culture that resulted from this merger might then complicate subsequent attempts to bring the CMNE back to a closer relationship with government.

The research is also driven by the political changes that have taken place in China since Xi Jinping came to power. Political imperatives seem play more significant role in both public and private sectors in the Xi Jinping's era, (Boustany and Ellings, 2018; Erik, 2018; Gill, 2022). Also, Chinese enterprises have come to be seen as commercial arms of expansionist statism since it became blurred of the nature of public and private sector (Blanchette, 2020). The ideology of 'Xi Jinping Thought' is also seen as a reflection of 'hegemony' (Lam, 2016; Garrick and Bennett, 2018; Lams, 2018; Gill, 2022). Gramsci (2020) claimed that "Hegemony can be viewed as a pervasive power of values and beliefs that rules through the generation of consent" (Lams, 2018, p. 391). For instance, Xi Jinping's revision of the constitution from 2018 also reflects his ambition to re-centralise power to the central government (Economy, 2018; Gueorguiev, 2018; Cabestan, 2019; Pankaj, 2020; Leutert and Eaton, 2021; Li, 2022a). As well as, the strategic development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a series of policy reforms and the digital sovereignty further characterise the political discourse of the

Communist Party of China (CCP) (Zeng, Stevens and Chen, 2017; Lams, 2018; Chan and Song, 2020; Costa, 2020; Hong and Goodnight, 2022; Woo, 2023). Consequently, it is interesting to understand whether and how private sector's corporate culture is affected by political imperatives.

While globalisation faltered, technological advances continued and China started to transform its economy via digital technology, especially in the post epidemic era (Huang, 2020). Digital transformation as a core national development strategy in China from 2021 will not only create demand for Chinese firms but will also enhance the mobility of digital talent in China (Liu, 2023). A blueprint and timeline for building a 'Digital China' was unveiled after the 14th Chinese People's Congress in 2023, with plans for China to be fully digital by 2035 (Shen, 2023). China is clearly using digital transformation to improve urban governance capacity and drive the digital transformation of Chinese enterprises by promoting smart cities and adapting intelligent devices in the construction of infrastructure (Qin and Qi, 2021; Xiao, Han and Zhang, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2023). Huawei is seen as a commercial extension of the CCP since Western media believes Huawei controlled by the Chinese military and working closely (Davis, 2018; Kaska, Beckvard and Minárik, 2019; Reichert, 2020; Lee, Han and Zhu, 2022; Berman, Maizland and Chatzky, 2023). There does not seem to be much controversy about Lenovo, which is similar in scale and business to Huawei, as Lenovo is still perceived as a global firm, not least due to its acquisition/merger with IBM. Therefore, it is important to investigate what role does Lenovo play in China's digital transformation, and whether the company's corporate culture has changed as a result of this closer relationship to government.

1.2 Background of the Research

1.2.1 Is Lenovo a transnational company?

In 1984, Liu Chuanzhi as a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences established a technology company named 'Legend' with colleagues and funded by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. In 2003 the company announced a new name as 'Lenovo' and prepared for entering and expanding overseas markets through cross-border acquisitions. Lenovo's globalisation through its acquisition strategy, particularly its acquisition of the IBM PC business is seen as the image of a 'snake swallowing an elephant' since Lenovo with annual revenues of \$3 billion acquired a company with annual revenues of \$13 billion (Ling, 2006; Liu, 2007; Riad, Vaara and Zhang, 2012; Zhou and Huang, 2014; Cho, 2015; Schmid and Polat, 2018; Tarakdjian, 2021). It is a very interesting question that 'Is Lenovo a transnational company?', the researcher asked many University colleagues at the beginning of the research whether they had ever heard of the Lenovo and almost all thought Lenovo was an American company. People easy to forget Lenovo is a Chinese technology company due to it acquired ThinkPad from IBM in 2005 (Yang, 2021). Similarly, Lenovo Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Yang Yuanqing claimed in an interview that Lenovo is not a Chinese company (Udemans, 2018). Much of the discussion about the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture has remained at the stage of cultural integration (Liu, 2007; Peng, 2008; Chen, 2009; Cheng and Yang, 2010; Stahl and Lengyel, 2013; Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2016; Xu *et al.*, 2016), thus this research will in-depth explore whether and how its corporate culture has changed nearly 20 years after cross-border acquisition.

IBM had in the past been a byword for global or transnational corporate culture. In the 1970s Hofstede tested the model of cultural dimensions by accessing the IBM database including about 40 countries, and findings reflected in the IBM data built a theory that national culture is one of dimensions in multinational enterprises, the significance being that even IBM's global

culture was underlaid by national differences (Hofstede, 1984b; 2001; 2011). The Hofstede model of national culture provides a foundation for discussion in the cross-cultural topic (McSweeney, 2002; Shi and Wang, 2011; Minkov and Kaasa, 2021).

Hofstede's national culture model brings an idea to explore the Chinese MNEs, especially Lenovo as it theoretically should have IBM's legacy of strong corporate culture after the acquisition. There is indirectly interesting evidence to potentially realise the impact of IBM's cultural legacy on Lenovo's culture that Buck Rodgers and Robert L. Shook wrote a book about IBM's strategies in 1998 named *The IBM Way*, and a book about how diversified Lenovo corporate culture called *The Lenovo Way* was co-authored by Gina Qiao and Yolanda Conyers in 2015. *The IBM Way* reflects Lenovo's corporate culture development process of embracing globalisation after acquired PC business from IBM, however, being a multinational enterprise (MNE) was not the whole story of Lenovo as its also had a national culture, especially in its domestic market. This raises the question of the extent to which Lenovo still has a multi-cultural identity; therefore, this research is going to explore the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture through two different cultural forces: the culture that emerged after the merger and acquisition (M&A) in 2005, and the State culture that has been promoted in recent years.

1.2.2 How far does Lenovo emphasise the importance of OC in Strategic HRM?

Strategic HRM (SHRM) as one of major subdomains of HRM focuses on "the overall HR strategies adopted by business unites" (Boxall, Purcell and Wright, 2007, p. 3), and participate in the development and implementation of company strategies in the long term through HR functional activities such as recruitment and training (Wright and McMahan, 1992; Delery and Doty, 1996; Bagga and Srivastava, 2014). SHRM is to create cultural consistency that supports organisational strategy to achieve goals (Way and Johnson, 2005). It argues the organisational culture should support the company's strategy even before the SHRM is implemented (Cabrera

and Bonache, 1999). Organisational culture is a moderator of the relationship between organisational strategy and SHRM. (Harrison and Bazy, 2017). In a study of 223 Chinese firms, it was found that corporate culture had an impact on the implementation of SHRM (Wei *et al.*, 2008). This section will illustrate how Lenovo's overall globalisation strategy changed after cross-border acquisition and how Lenovo's OC influences its human resources strategy and SHRM implementation.

Company globalisation strategy

According to the autobiography of Liu Chuanzhi (the founder of Lenovo) , the decision to set globalisation as a company strategy goal was made in Lenovo's senior strategy meeting in late 2003 when company realised that there were limited opportunities to expand the domestic market (Liu, 2007). Lenovo turned into a large transnational corporation in May 2005 with the acquisition of IBM's PC branch and rapidly took overseas market share (Hill, 2004; Wang, 2009). Cross-border acquisition became the most popular way for companies to enter the global market after 2000 with for over 31% of total acquisition (Liu, 2005). Lenovo benefited from cross-border acquisition not only in terms of gaining human capital and core technologies, but also it increased brand value when the threat posed by the entry of Dell and Samsung into domestic market (Hill, 2004; Liu, 2005; Liu and Buck, 2009) However, it argues that the global economy will replace the concept of globalisation since globalisation does not construct a world economy between countries as transnational corporations are not truly transnational in nature because they simply operate business regionally (Hirst, Thompson and Bromley, 2015).

Lenovo made three main changes in its organisational strategy after the acquisition to meet the challenges of globalisation. Firstly, Lenovo operated a 'one company, two systems' model in the first few years and took the initiative to closer to IBM's PC business management process (Conyers and Qiao, 2014). Secondly, the company adopted localisation as one of its core

strategies whereby it did not seek to transfer the business model and culture of its parent company to overseas markets (Conyers and Qiao, 2014; Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Thirdly, Lenovo used performance evaluation to link to organisational strategy, such as using a 360-degree performance evaluation, in which an appraisal system combines OC and organisational strategy (Conyers and Qiao, 2014). In addition, Gina Qiao (a former Senior Vice President of global human resource of Lenovo) emphasised four core strategies for Lenovo's success in global integration, one of which was global cultural integration (Conyers and Qiao, 2014).

Although Lenovo grew from a local Chinese private company to become the third largest PC multinational in the world, the company feared that there would be a conflict between the national and organisational cultures after acquisition was completed. Culture clashes were seen as inevitable, and possibly leading to employee alienation in the acquired company (Liu, 2005). Therefore, what are the changes in Lenovo's corporate culture after the completion of the acquisition activities will be indicated next from the perspective of SHRM.

SHRM in Lenovo

After cross-border acquisition, Lenovo focused on multicultural integration since the role of SHRM was to create an inclusive and unified corporate culture (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Lenovo creates the position of Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) and takes the lead as the first Chinese company to do that. The role of CDO is to manage diversity and inclusion as part of leadership consideration (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). For Lenovo, CDO position shapes the company into a diverse and global company identity, making it easier to attract and retain talented employees from around the world (Martin, 2021). Although the advantages of CDOs help with change management and corporate strategy implementation, it has been criticised that it does not have the ability to drive systemic change (Stefanie, 2022). During the company integration stage, the CDO faced a number of problems:

1. Trust issue: between management and executive, between regions etc.
2. Responsibility problem: the vague division of responsibilities leads to shirking responsibility to each other.
3. Unclear development direction: there is no clear corporate strategy and vision after acquisition.
4. Execution problem: top-down model leads to a waste of time and human capital, also lack of cooperation between employees or departments.
5. Capacity issue: lack of investment in talent recruitment and management.
6. Innovation problem: bureaucratic environments discourage employees from proposing new ideas because they are unsure if the top leaders are supportive.

Most of the challenges here were seen as due to cultural differences because the company had three incompatible cultures after the acquisition - the Lenovo culture, the IBM culture, and the Dell culture. Consequently, Lenovo placed the integration of corporate culture as a priority task.

Integrating organisational culture was seen as an important part of the post-acquisition process (Lin and Wei, 2006; Lodorfos G and Boateng, 2006). There are four modes of acculturation: assimilation, integration, separation and deculturation (Nahavandi and Malekzadeh, 1988). Lenovo chose to assimilate American principles by using English as the official language when working (Conyers and Qiao, 2014). Also, much infrastructure was changed in the Beijing headquarters, including the installation of Western-style toilets and branded coffee shops (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). According to Cui *et al.* (2016) study, there were four stages of Lenovo culture integration which are exploration, experimentation, reinforcement and fixing. In the first stage, the company delivered questionnaires to both IBM and Lenovo China employees and tried to identify the differences and challenges. In the second stage, Lenovo created CDO

position to speed up culture integration by reducing cultural barriers/conflicts (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). In the reinforcement phase, company took an interactive culturing model, whereby senior managers are introduced each other's cultures through a combination of formal and informal methods (Cui *et al.*, 2016). In the final stage, the integrated culture will be promoted to all levels of company, and Gina highlighted when culture integration that "we will neither absorb nor abandon IBM's OC." (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Consequently, the integrated organisational culture is based on the shared values of Lenovo and IBM, which are: serve customers, encourage innovation, maintain integrity, and win-win in diversity: serving customers, encourage innovation, maintain integrity, and diversifying win-win. Furthermore, this research will seek to understanding what role of corporation culture play in Lenovo cooperation strategy and how far has the nature of corporate culture changed.

1.2.3 Digital transformation development in China

This section will describe the development process of digital transformation in China where the idea had been introduced in Jiang Zemin, and Xi Jinping has designated digital transformation as one of key strategies in State development.

Driven by the global epidemic, China has accelerated the process of comprehensive digital transformation in 2021 (Dorman, 2020; Wu, 2022). It is a series of governance reforms under Xi Jinping's leadership, including to the areas such as the private sector, education and internet governance (Yang, Lee and Zhang, 2021). However, digital transformation is not receiving more attention in HR strategies (Wang, 2023). The State Council issued a statement to combine 'Digital China' with 5G in a wide range of areas in 2023, and efficient digital modernisation by 2025 (Shen, 2023). McKinsey reported the government has played an important role in the development of the digital economy (Bu *et al.*, 2021). In contrast to Western digital development, China initially focused on mobile payment, video streaming and e-commerce (Li,

2022b). The digital economy already accounted for close to 40% of China's total GDP in 2021 (Liu, 2023). The State government also plans to help 4,000 to 6,000 small and medium size firms to achieve digital transformation by 2025. On the other hand, the digital transformation is facing many challenges in China. Firstly, one research examined the impact of digital transformation on Chinese firms via an empirical approach and indicated that higher the level of digital transformation of a company, the higher risks taken by the company and its management (Tian, Li and Cheng, 2022). Secondly, data collected from different sources cannot be integrated and it is lack of standardization of data variability (Liu, 2023). Thirdly, data security also could be a challenge that both storage and analysis of the data are a potential threat to the firms (Liu, 2023). Although the rapid development of digital transformation has been supported by the State government, the challenges and potential threats remain in China.

As for the political system, the State government adopted in-depth reform to streamline administration and institute decentralisation through integrating digital governance in 2021 (Xinhua, 2021). In the e-government survey report published by the United Nations in 2022 where China's e-government ranking is at 42 out of 193 members worldwide (United Nations, 2022). The aims of Chinese e-government are not only to increase transparency and accountability, but also to promote greater participation by citizens, business and non-government organizations (El-Ebiary *et al.*, 2020) In contrast to the period of information and communications technology development when government relied on official website and physical channels, nowadays, e-government promotes to using social media such as Weibo and WeChat (Yang, 2017). For example, local governments have developed and embedded service platform on WeChat where allow citizens or business sectors easy to check information and request application without time and location limits (Hou, 2014). WeChat already has 30,000 government applets to assist with the application and track the procedure up to 2021 (Ullah *et*

al., 2021). However, it has criticised the cost of e-government development that the inevitable challenges of operation, maintenance, and data security (Wang and Hou, 2010). Apart from applying digital transformation on e-government, the State government also focusing on develop smart cities to achieve comprehensive digital transformation.

The central government is massively invested in smart cities (Schleicher *et al.*, 2016; Lan *et al.*, 2020). The concept of smart cities is a combination of digital cities and the Internet of Things that leads to more efficient and flexible improvements in city operations (Su, Li and Fu, 2011). The purpose of smart cities is to respond to urban issues and improve governance capacity (Deloitte, 2020; Huang *et al.*, 2021). The construction of smart cities includes smart communities, smart healthcare, and smart communication (Yang and Chong, 2021). The development of 5G provides a platform for building smart cities in public safety and traffic management (Bu *et al.*, 2021; Ullah *et al.*, 2021). Chinese technology firms are direct beneficiaries of smart cities construction and implementation, as they can provide the equipment and services needed for infrastructure development (Huang *et al.*, 2021). The key driving role played by the State in digital transformation raises the question of how the culture of the corporate culture of technology companies is changing as a result of the state's digital transformation initiative and the closer relationship with state institutions.

1.3 Research Rationale

The underlying rationale for this research is fourfold. Firstly, the main underlying reason for the research is to understand the changing nature of CMNEs. Buckley *et al.* (2007) were the first to explore the theory of CMNE and one of explanations given was that China's outward foreign direct investment has been correlated with the cultural proximity of the host country which helps to explain the behaviour of CMNEs. However, their research is mainly focused on State-owned CMNES rather private CMNEs. Many studies seem to point to the unique way

(through cross-border merger and outward foreign direct investment) in which Chinese MNEs have been gradually internationalising (Lyles, Li and Yan, 2014; Deng and Yang, 2015; Ramamurti and Hillemann, 2018). On the other hand, the question of what the real “Chinese characteristics” of CMNE are needs to be addressed, for example, how far are they converging with Western practices and cultures?

Secondary, another underlying reason for the research is that there has been growing research on the impact of Chinese State capitalism on Chinese business development, especially under Xi Jinping’s leadership. Although many studies have looked at whether and how the CCP has expanded control on private enterprises (Blanchette, 2020; Zhong and Stevenson, 2021; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022), there is a lack of empirical case study research in the field. Additionally, most of the research on this topic is either outdated (Hachigian, 2001; Breslin, 2012; Li, 2016; Yan and Huang, 2017; Blanchette, 2019) or has been conducted from the perspective of the BRI (Nouwens, 2019; Jin *et al.*, 2021; Eliküçük Yildirim and Yilmaz, 2023; Wu, 2023). Therefore, it is important to update the views from culture perspectives.

Thirdly, culture is the root to conduct this research since culture as an element that cannot be ignored in CMNE. Duo to there is several studies that use Hofstede National Culture model to study on national culture to transnational development (Vachon, 2010; López-Duarte, Vidal-Suárez and González-Díaz, 2016; Beugelsdijk, Kostova and Roth, 2017; Kristjánsdóttir *et al.*, 2017; Beugelsdijk and Welzel, 2018). Although the process of hybridisation maybe found in many areas such as economic, there is a lack of research on culture aspect (Burke, 2009). However, the concept of hybrid culture was renewed and research on this topic increased around 2005 (Kraidy, 2002; 2004; Hutnyk, 2005; Kraidy, 2006). It leads to most of the studies focus on culture change in MNEs (Garcia-Lorenzo and Nolas, 2005; Muratbekova-Touron,

2005; Kwok-bun, Luk and Wang, 2006; Smith and Kuth, 2008; Onatolu, 2013; Aljayi *et al.*, 2016). There is lack of research which look at hybrid culture in China context as well as Lenovo.

Lastly, the underlying reason for this research is that conducting this culture-centred research not only extends knowledge in cross disciplinary field, but also in-depth to understand the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture from within.

1.4 Research Aims, Question and Objectives

1.4.1 Research Aims

The overall aim of this research is to explore the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture, and how has it been shaped, respectively, by national and global influences. Lenovo has been seen the most international company of Chinese multinational (Holstein, 2014; Fernando, 2023) and a symbol of convergences with Western culture (Stahl and Lengyel, 2013; Boiano, 2020), thus the Lenovo is selected as a having been the most noticeably case study. Lenovo became an outstanding example of internationalism, when internationalism was favoured in China (Lu and Tian, 2008; Sun, 2020), however, after the last decade international approaches appeared (in high-tech enterprises) to be under political pressure (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018; Gerard, 2021; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022), which raised the question of how far the strong international culture of Lenovo could survive in a less supportive context? The focus of this research will be on global HR strategy as a key driver of corporation culture (Chew and Horwitz, 2004). Therefore, this research identifies human resource strategy and cultural as the key dimensions to explore how far is Lenovo's corporation culture between national and transnational cultures. In addition, this research considers the public policy context as a factor representing national culture, since digital transformation is the most important component of China's national development strategy (Dorman, 2020; Lan *et al.*, 2020; Ullah *et al.*, 2021; UnitedNations, 2022; Wu, 2022; Shen, 2023), the researcher's exploration of how the

development of digital transformation affects the development of Lenovo's corporate culture therefore provides an empirical finding. This research is based on the interpretivism as an epistemology while using case study as a research strategy to explore the 'what' and 'how' questions of case company from HR strategy and culture perspectives.

1.4.2 Research questions and objectives

The main research question is **to what extent does Lenovo have hybrid culture?** As discussed in earlier pages, the research question starts from a cultural perspective to explore whether Lenovo as a CMNE follows national or global principles in corporate strategies as reflected in its HR strategies. The main research question can be divided into the two questions as following:

Research Question 1: What is Lenovo's HR strategy?

This is a fundamental question designed to understand the specifics of Lenovo's HR strategy presently, including organisational culture, talent acquisition and talent development, etc. This question could provide updated data for subsequent exploration of HR strategy changes.

Research Question 2: To what extent is Lenovo's HR strategy transnational?

This question is to firstly discover whether there is cultural hybridity in Lenovo, and then to explore how the different elements of culture affect the company strategy in terms of its HR strategy. In other words, for a transnational firm like Lenovo, which gained its multinational identity through cross-border acquisitions, cultural hybridity is inevitable. However, it is unknown that how the cultural hybridity changes when company re-focuses on local markets under current policy context. In addition to culture, Lenovo's human resource strategy development in terms of talent management may receive influence when State government updated comprehensive policy reform, it also reflects this research of whether its strategic development following transnational principle or national principle.

To support those research questions, the research objectives are as following:

1. To understand the Lenovo's corporate culture in action and learn more about its HR strategy. The best means of achieving this was by participant observation at Lenovo's global headquarters.
2. To access in-depth perspectives on corporate culture in Lenovo through semi-structured interviews with participants, as a follow-up to participative observation, and conducting thematic analysis to interpret how the data answered the research questions.

1.5 The Scope and Structure of the Thesis

This thesis primarily explores the influence of the State in shaping corporate culture within Chinese multinational corporation, focusing on the role of national and global influence on corporate culture in multinationals. Specifically, this research leverage HR strategy in multinational as they may close with corporate culture development and therefore affect M&A's corporate culture. From a disciplinary perspective, this research is grounded in corporate culture and organizational behaviour, with some intersections in HR strategy. It explores management, corporate culture, and political policy, with a specific emphasis on the cultural dimension. The thesis conducts six chapters in total.

The Introduction Chapter has illustrated the research background and detail information of the research including research rationale, aims, research questions and objectives. In the Literature Review Chapter, the theoretical framework and debate on literature. The Methodology Chapter will show how the research has been developed. In the Findings Chapter, both descriptive data and analytical data will be presented. The Discussion Chapter will highlight the key findings and compare the differences and similarities between key findings and literatures. The Conclusion Chapter in the end will summarise the outcomes and contribution of thesis, and

then conclude the limitations within the research, as well as the recommendations for further research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores organisation culture-related literature, it consists of three main parts. The first part (sections 2.2) is going to introduce key terms related this research, the second part (section 2.3-2.6) will discuss the literatures related to organisational cultural theory, and the final part will identify the gap in the literature that the thesis will address, and propose a theoretical framework based on this literature review. In this research, the literature search strategy in the initial stage involved searching for the terms “corporate culture”, “multinational enterprise culture” and “corporate culture in M&A” in Google Scholar search engine based on the research question and research aims. And then determine the sub-headings in the literature review chapter through reviewing the discussion of idea contained in relevant literatures. The selection of literature was based on the number of citations and the most recent research as the screening criteria. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009), the detail information for defining parameters of this research see [Figure 2.1](#).

The conceptual framework of this research defines the key concepts that address the research problem which is essentially the nature of corporate culture in the Chinese multinationals, and the degree to which the domestic and multinationals cultures can be integrated. Thus, the related concepts will be reviewed are: corporate culture, national culture, and cultural hybridity.

The first subheading (section 2.2) introduces the definitions of MNEs, CMNEs, and political imperative. It gives an understanding of how CMNEs are different from other MNEs and explain why it is important to look at Chinese MNEs.

The second subheading (section 2.3) discusses the definition of the corporate culture and how the corporate culture concept was developed. In this section we also review the key models of corporate culture such as the iceberg model and Hofstede's six dimension model and discuss current corporate culture research, whereby it is highlighted that corporate culture is never a stable model (Spicer, 2020; Suprapti *et al.*, 2020) and it plays an intermediary role in an organization (Asbari *et al.*, 2020; Aggarwal and Agarwala, 2023; Madi Odeh *et al.*, 2023).

Considering the relative uniqueness of becoming a MNE through cross-border mergers and acquisitions, the third subheading (section 2.4) extends the corporate culture concept to the mergers and acquisitions context. Although recent studies recognise the importance of corporate culture in M&A firms (Yoo, 2020; Doukas and Zhang, 2021), most studies focus on the change and integration of corporate culture at the time of the M&A (Hertel, Kaya and Reichmann, 2023) and give less attention to the further evolution of corporate culture development in the longer term post-M&A (Thorwid and Vinge, 2020).

The fourth subheading (section 2.5) reviews the concept of national culture as one of the elements that may shape corporate culture. This section reviews the concept and model of national culture, as well as discussing the Chinese cultural context. Recent research has shown that corporate culture is indeed influenced by national culture, in line with Hofstede's model (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Knein *et al.*, 2020; Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020). However, there is a lack of empirical research to understand how the changes of corporate culture in CMNEs may be affected by national culture.

The fifth subheading (section 2.6) reviews the concept of cultural hybridity and convergence, with the idea that contemporary Chinese culture as a whole is hybrid (Chang, 2008; Faure and

Fang, 2008; Fitrah, 2022). It has also been argued that cultural hybridity is very common in multinational companies in terms of HRM (Ge and Zhao, 2020; Gratton, 2021). However, Yousfi (2021) highlighted that national culture as a factor cannot be ignored when corporate culture is hybrid, but there is a lack of empirical research to investigate how or how far national culture shapes corporate culture in the context of cultural. In addition, recent research has called for cultural hybridity in organisations to receive more attention (Ge and Zhao, 2020; Gratton, 2021; Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021).

Section 2.7 emphasis the existing literature gaps in this topic that although some studies have discussed Lenovo’s acquisition of IBM PC business through a corporate culture perspective (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Wang, 2015), the findings not only stop before 2016 but also appear to lack an understanding of what elements shape Lenovo’s corporate culture. It is therefore necessary to consider whether there is still in Lenovo a legacy of IBM’s corporate culture, nearly a decade after the acquisition.

The following is an overview of the literature review:

SECTION	CONTENT
2.2 KEY TERMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the definition of the terms in this research
2.3 CORPORATE CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the definition of the corporate culture. • Reviews the corporate culture topic literature to demonstrate the understanding of theory development.
2.4 CORPORATE CULTURE AFTER M&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overviews the M&A research and discuss the role of corporate culture in M&A.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews the literature to discuss whether corporate culture is different after M&A activity to illustrate what factors might influence change in corporate culture.
2.5 NATIONAL CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the definition of national culture. • Overviews the Chinese national culture to demonstrate the understanding of the impact of political imperative on corporate culture.
2.6 CULTURAL HYBRIDITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews the meaning of cultural hybridity and understand the discussion about cultural hybridity in HRM. • Discusses the meaning of convergence to illustrate the understanding of convergence in HRM.
2.7 LITERATURE GAP AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicates the literature gap in this topic and justify how the research question and aims are developed. • Propose a theoretical framework to this research.

2.2 Key Terms

2.2.1 Multinational enterprises

Multinational enterprise has been defined differently according to the degree of firm-level multinationalism as scholars have emphasised the importance of multinational theory differently in their research fields. There are different terms used to describe MNEs such as “transnational enterprise”, “international corporation”, and “global firm” (Kuşluvan, 1998). Aharoni (1971) earliest attempts to address the problem of MNE definition were through perspectives from performance, structural, and behavioural. The initial definition of multinational is developed from early 1970s as follows:

“We define MNEs as companies which undertake productive activities outside the country in which they are incorporated”

Dunning (1977, p. 400)

As the phenomenon of greenfield investment has become more popular, more and more strategic alliances have been established between multinational enterprises, the definition of multinational updated based on Dunning’s definition as follows:

“the MNE today, whether in manufacturing or in services, often has a wide range of activities in different countries, from wholly owned subsidiaries, to contract production to joint ventures in capital-intensive businesses.”

(Grosse, 2004, p. 86)

This definition describes the MNEs from entry mode perspective in terms of wholly owned subsidiaries and joint ventures. In addition, one widely adapted definition of MNEs is from outward foreign direct investment (FDI) perspective that international expansion to emerging market, as follows:

“We define MNEs as international companies that originated from emerging markets and are engaged in outward FDI, where they exercise effective control and undertake value-adding activities in one or more foreign countries.”

Luo and Tung (2007, p. 482)

Based on the development of the definition of MNEs, many scholars have discussed the categories of firm’s multinationalism. Perlmutter (1969) developed a classification of international firm’s multinationalism from the perspective of executives: home country-oriented (ethnocentric), host country-oriented (polycentric), and world-oriented (geocentric). Also, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989) pointed out MNEs category from organizational structure perspective as: multinational, international, transnational, and global. In addition, Hill, Hwang

and Kim (1990) claimed that different entry mode may pull the MNE in different directions. However, Rugman (2003) studies 500 MNEs found that only nine were “global”, and criticised that multinationals are not global, but regional. Also, Hirst, Thompson and Bromley (2015) agreed that MNEs only operate business in different countries separately, they do not realise the true transnational operation in essence. With China’s need to “go global”, the prominence of CMNEs on the global stage seems to be changing the landscape of international business (Alden and Davies, 2006). The “emerging giants” represented by Huawei and Lenovo appear to have had a disruptive effect on established Western multinationals (Ramamurti, 2009). Also CMNEs seem to capture a growing share of the global international consumer market (Shambaugh, 2012). Ramamurti and Singh (2009) published a book emphasis the multinationals in different county studies and bring an attention on CMNEs. Therefore, it requires a comparison of MNEs and Chinese MNEs to understand how CMNEs are different from other firms.

2.2.2 Chinese MNEs

The definition of Chinese MNEs is emphasised government support as most Chinese enterprises began to enter the global business arena in the 1990s with government support (M. Rugman, TK Nguyen and Wei, 2014; Wang, 2022b).

The motivation of Chinese MNEs is unlike other MNEs (Rugman and Li, 2007; Zhang, 2009; Sun *et al.*, 2012; Casanova and Miroux, 2019). Rugman and Li (2007) emphasised that the motivation of Chinese MNEs was different from that of other countries, as Chinese MNEs did not have knowledge-based firm-specific advantages and therefore the motivation of going global was more oriented towards knowledge seekers. (Zhang, 2009) agrees and adds that the differences between Chinese MNEs and MNEs from other countries mainly come from the ownership structure and motivation from the perspective of outward direct investment (ODI)

that the CMNEs are mostly composed of Chinese State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in monopolised industries, while private firms are motivated to become multinationals through ODI by seeking to add value to their assets and technology such as Lenovo. Sun *et al.* (2012) compared Chinese and Indian MNEs through the ownership advantage framework and found that while India MNEs had a greater advantage in labour costs, Chinese MNEs were more significant in an ability to acquire technology. Access to advanced technology is among the reasons for the rapid emergence of Chinese MNEs in the global arena (Casanova and Miroux, 2019).

National government creates advantage that make Chinese MNEs different from other MNEs (Peng, 2012; Shambaugh, 2012; Wei, Clegg and Ma, 2015; Ramamurti and Hillemann, 2018; Casanova and Miroux, 2019). Peng (2012) discusses the uniqueness of Chinese MNEs in terms of their globalisation strategy view, the important role played by the home government in creating advantages for CMNEs, and then the rapid entry into global market through high-profile acquisition. Ramamurti and Hillemann (2018) added that the Chinese government has been actively involved and dominated of the internationalisation of Chinese MNEs. Casanova and Miroux (2019) also repeatedly emphasise that the Chinese government support and encouragement has facilitated the rapid global expansion of Chinese MNEs, on the other hand, Chinese MNEs (such as Haier and Lenovo) are more likely to acquire North American and European firms than are Japanese and South Korean MNEs. However, Shambaugh (2012) argues that the uniqueness of Chinese MNEs goes beyond the advantages offered by the national government, but more importantly it lies in how Chinese MNEs are intrinsically inextricable from their own political culture, with many having Communist Party branches and party members within the firm. Also, Wei, Clegg and Ma (2015) suggest that the unconscious role of the Chinese government has shaped Chinese private multinationals as “market seekers”.

Recent research confirms that Chinese MNEs are different from other MNEs. Rashidin *et al.* (2020) suggests, comparing Chinese and United State MNEs, that in addition to having differences in operational practices, government involvement provides Lenovo with intangible benefits, hindering the company from fully globalising. Institutional embeddedness reflected in political culture is therefore shaping the internationalisation strategies of Chinese MNEs (Sun *et al.*, 2021). In this research, the researcher argues that the domestic political culture of the home country may have an embedded effect influence on Chinese MNEs in terms of culture. Froese *et al.* (2020) Compared Chinese, Japanese and Korean MNEs through a global HR perspective and found that although most Chinese MNEs actively adopt Western best HRM practices, they tend to maintain a headquarters-driven culture compared to MNEs in other countries. From a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) perspective, Ervits (2021) found that behind the apparent “symbolic” convergence of Chinese MNEs with Western MNEs, essential differences remain in practice. Although recent studies have attempted to discuss Chinese MNEs from a cultural perspective (Li, Xu and Fan, 2021; Hui, 2022; Feng and Liu, 2023), they have lacked empirical studies from a purely cultural perspective to explain what underlying cultural forces shape the globalisation process of Chinese MNEs.

In summary, the nature of Chinese MNEs is seen as distinct from other MNEs because the motivation of Chinese MNEs is resources-seeking oriented, while government-created advantages accelerate the expansion of Chinese MNEs in ‘market seeking’. This has stimulated research attempts to explore the cultural nature of Chinese MNEs taking account of the influential role of Chinese governmental culture.

2.2.3 Political imperative

Corporate transnational development and overseas investment have become progressively politicised (Gilpin, 2016). In the development of the globalisation process, the power of the State under nationalism has not decline but shifted (Babic, Fichtner and Heemskerk, 2017). The Chinese private sector relies on the economic diplomacy between the central government and developing countries to gain a foothold in overseas markets (Fei, 2021). Most Chinese large companies have government affairs staff and opportunities to participate in government-arranged meetings, and a good relationship with the government (both local and State governments) can help a company gain more opportunities for official contacts (Kennedy, 2007). It argues that the impact of political imperative on firms (as well as company strategies) can vary depending on the structure of the industry (Ring, Lenway and Govekar, 1990). China seeks to secure its economic interests abroad by intervening (Zou and Jones, 2021). Although many previous studies have explored the extended control of the CCP over Chinese private firms (Lin, 2010; Davis, 2018; Blanchette, 2020; Zhong and Stevenson, 2021; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022), few have examined how extended control impacts corporate culture. Ring, Lenway and Govekar (1990) presented the framework of political imperatives to be managed from a strategic perspective (see [Figure 2.2](#)), based on this framework this research argues that the Chinese government's invisible intervention in Chinese private firms as a manifestation of political imperative and views this force as domestic political culture.

2.3 Corporate Culture

2.3.1 Definition of the corporate culture

The roots of corporate culture come from the team theory that Marschak (1955) first proposed a theory of team which is all people in a team would make different decisions but eventually receive a common reward based on those decisions. Groves (1973) critically argues that there is no need to consider incentive issues in idealised theory of team as the absence of conflicts

of interest between individuals and believes that the team members would behave more as a team once team theory considers incentive structures. Prior research has shown that culture could produce a phenomenon within an organization (Louis, 1981; Tichy, 1982), a cognitive perspective emphasis culture as an internal variable that members share values in an organization network (Smircich, 1983). Deal and Kennedy (1982) brought attention on corporate culture by outlined four culture prototypes. Also, Peters and Waterman (1984) emphasised the importance of 'strong culture' by defining the corporate culture as a system to share values, norms and routines. During the immature stage of corporate culture theory, most of the literature was discussed based on organisational climate (James and Jones, 1974; Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey, 2013).

Hampden-Turner (1990) describes corporate culture as the basic assumptions developed by members of an organisation in the process of external and internal integration and the continuation of such cognitive can be consistently passed on to new members. Crémer (1993, p. 354) defines corporate culture from an economic point of view as 'the part of stock of knowledge that is shared by a substantial portion of the employees of the firm, but not by the general population from which they are drawn.'. However, Van den Steen (2010) argues that corporate culture as shared beliefs and values rather than shared stock of knowledge. Gorton and Zentefis (2023, pp. 734-735) proposed a theory of corporate culture to define culture as 'the importance people assign to values, morals, norms, customs, traditions, symbols, and typical behavioural patterns that are shared in an organization.' (Gorton and Zentefis, 2020; 2023). Whist a considerable body of research has been carried out on define corporate culture, the importance of corporate culture in the industry has not been fully explained (Gorton, Grennan and Zentefis, 2022), particularly in terms of its impact on the development of corporate culture under the post epidemic era (Barrero, Bloom and Davis, 2021; Makridis and

Schloetzer, 2022). Similarly, previous research has established that an organization with a strong corporate culture are more likely to be succeed (Porter, 1985; Gordon and DiTomaso, 1992; Burt *et al.*, 1994; Rashid, Sambasivan and Johari, 2003; Kotter, 2008). While (Sørensen, 2002) discussed that the reliability of strong corporate cultures fades with unstable environments, it does not take into account whether national culture is one of the factors contributing to environmental instability.

Although Hampden-Turner (1990) argues that organizational culture is not like corporate culture, he does not justify the difference between these two terms. By reviewing the literatures which used these two terms (Barney, 1986; Fondas, 1991; Gordon and DiTomaso, 1992; Deshpandé, Farley and Webster Jr, 1993; Lee and Yu, 2004), it reveals that the terms of ‘organizational culture’ and ‘corporate culture’ are often used interchangeably with essentially same meanings. With the development of culture theory, the concept of organisational culture is discussed more rather than corporate culture (Hofstede, 1984b; Hofstede *et al.*, 1990; Hatch, 1993; Alvesson, 2002; Chhokar, Brodbeck and House, 2007). Thus, the next section will discuss the implementation of corporate culture to understand how organizational culture analysed in theoretical perspective.

2.3.2 An overview of corporate culture

Models of organizational culture

Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) present a conceptual framework for organizational culture as a symbol that shaped by organization history, leadership, and contingencies. Changes in OC have given rise to a discussion about OC models (Gagliardi, 1986).

Herman (1970) developed the cultural iceberg model that to understand OC dynamics from formal aspects (overt: goals, structure, etc.) and informal aspects (covert: values, beliefs, etc.).

Indeed, Sasu (2016) emphasizes that political force may lead and control all aspects of the active direction of the cultural iceberg. Thus, the extent to which political context affects OC has remained controversial.

Hofstede (1980) focused on cross-cultural management research in large multinational companies (IBM) and developed the cultural dimension theory, which includes: power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation versus short-term orientation, indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 1998; 2011). It has been discussed the importance of OC as 'the culture influences how people behave and think.' (Hofstede, 1980; Sun, 2008, p. 140). It has been argued that OC can have an impact on the selection of senior management (Dimitrakaki, 2022), as well as employee performance (Wijayanti and Tirtoprojo, 2023). A study argues that national culture plays an important role in determining organisational culture (Khripunov, 2023). While recent evidence using Hofstede's model suggests that Chinese national culture is closely related to the CCP political environment (Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Lee and Ande, 2023), much less is known about how far Chinese national culture influences OC in practice.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) viewed OC as a model based on two axes (degree of risk and degree of feedback) and summarised four different types of OC, which are work-hard, play-hard culture, tough-guy macho culture, bet-the-company culture, and process culture. Kane-Urrabazo (2006) applied this model to address the importance of management's role in the development of OC. Karim and Qamruzzaman (2020) discussed the influence of corporate culture on organizational performance and that OC can reflect organisational development. However, Deal and Kennedy (2000) argued that no organization tends to have one single specific type of culture. The reality, in other words, is one of mixed-up different types of culture.

Wallach (1983) defined an OC classification as bureaucratic culture, innovative culture, and supportive culture. Mohd Isa, Ugheoke and Wan Mohd Noor (2016) extended this model to examine the public sector OC and found that bureaucratic culture has a significant effect on employee's performance. Similarly, Sarhan *et al.* (2020) applied this model to the hotel industry research and found that bureaucratic culture and supportive culture are predictable for organisational commitment. On the other hand, Suifan (2021) argues that the bureaucratic culture does not correlate with organizational performance.

Schein (1992) presented a dynamic model of OC that includes three layers which are artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumption. Schein (1995) argued that OC is an evolutionary process of transmitting values from the founders to the employees and ultimately reflecting the embodiment of the founders' theories through the OC. Similarly, Williams, Dobson and Walters (1993) believed that OC is the most difficult element to change within an organization (cited in Cacciattolo, 2014). The limitation of not giving sufficient consideration to subcultures within an organization culture is increasingly apparent (Mamatha and Geetanjali, 2020).

Previous research has shown that OC has other different classifications. Sonnenfeld (1988) classified OC as four different types, including fortress culture, baseball team culture, academic culture, and club culture. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) identified types of OC as: family, Eiffel Tower, guided missile, and incubator (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2003). Handy (1999) developed an OC model as power, task, person, and role cultures. Quinn and Cameron (1999) presented a typological theory for OC which includes: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy (Cameron and Freeman, 1985). It has been argued that organizations tend to oscillate between two different cultures (Deal and Kennedy, 2000; Zaiř and ZAIř, 2016).

The empirical research today

A review of the last five years (2020-2024) of research on the topic of corporate culture highlights the importance of OC in social science research (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Azeem *et al.*, 2021; Naveed *et al.*, 2022; Barjak and Heimsch, 2023; Gorton and Zentefis, 2023; Zaman, 2024). Indeed, the OC is never a stable pattern in organisations, especially it emphasises the significance of OC research in the post-global epidemic era (Spicer, 2020; Suprapti *et al.*, 2020).

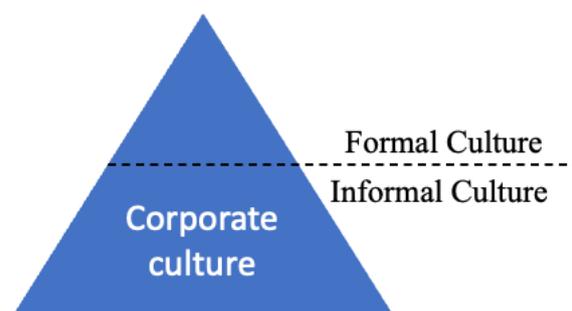
Recent evidence suggests that the OC plays an intermediate role in organizational development (Asbari *et al.*, 2020; Upadhyay and Kumar, 2020; Zhen *et al.*, 2021; Aggarwal and Agarwala, 2023). Lubis and Hanum (2020) analysed OC may help to create employee self-confidence in organizational like school. Likewise, Kalkan *et al.* (2020) found that OC contributes to a positive impact on organisational image in Turkey school. Although Bagga, Gera and Haque (2023) viewed OC in the Information Technology (IT) sector in the Asia-Pacific region found that a strong OC helps to drive organisational change, there is a lack of empirical evidence from China context. There are a few studies focusing on organisational culture and employee commitment (Giao, Vuong and Duy Tung, 2020), and argues that Chinese SOE employees received low levels of value commitment from OC (Wang, 2020c). Despite this, there is a relative paucity of research on OC in Chinese MNEs. However, there is a growing body of literature that investigates the role of OC in organizational resilience (Istiqaroh, Usman and Harjanti, 2022; Madi Odeh *et al.*, 2023), notably, the diversity OC has significant influence to enhance organizational resilience (Duchek, Raetze and Scheuch, 2020).

It seems that there is strong relationship between OC and organization performance or employee performance. Recent research has demonstrated that a positive and significant effect of OC on organization performance (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2020; Upadhyay and Kumar, 2020;

Akpa, Asikhia and Nneji, 2021). Nevertheless, the extent to which the effect of OC on employee performance has remained controversial. It has shown that OC has does not have any significant effect on employee performance (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Sabuhari *et al.*, 2020; Sapt, Muafi and SETINI, 2021). Conversely, Zacharias, Rahawarin and Yusriadi (2021) argued that there was positive effect of OC on employee performance, similarly, Nguyen, Yandi and Mahaputra (2020) believed that OC would influence employee performance only when an organization has a strong culture. Shamsudin and Velmurugan (2023) also support the idea that employee performance may depend on corporate culture.

Although much has been written much about corporate culture over decades, there still are further perspectives for the research, for example, Spicer (2020) suggests that it is significant to investigate how OC has been changed after global epidemic. Another topic could be relevant to this is the convergence between Chinese and Western culture, more specifically, the relationship between parent country culture and host country culture in Chinese multinationals. It can be assumed that Chinese multinationals has different cultural influences which may be formal and informal aspects, therefore this research is going to apply the cultural iceberg model to investigate the nature of Chinese company's OC from both formal and informal culture perspectives (as shown below).

Figure 2.3: Corporate Culture Exploration Diagram



(Developed by the researcher)

2.4 Corporate Culture in M&A

2.4.1 The importance of corporate culture in M&A

Coffey, Garrow and Holbeche (2012) described merger and acquisition as a “marriage”, Piesse *et al.* (2022, p. 541) give specific definitions from an economics standpoint that ‘acquisition as activities by which acquiring firms can control more than 50% of the equity of target firms, whereas in a merger at least two firms are combined with each other to form a “new” legal entity.’. Gitelson, Bing and Laroche (2001) highlighted that 83 per cent of all mergers and acquisitions do not ultimately lead to a positive outcome (cited in Makhlouk and Shevchuk, 2008). It has been discussed the importance of corporate culture in M&A as the key to success (Able, 2007; Bouwman, 2013; Idris, Wahab and Jaapar, 2015; Ismail and Baki, 2017), also the issue of cultural differences is one of the common reasons for M&A failures (Weber, 1996; Weber, Shenkar and Raveh, 1996; Makhlouk and Shevchuk, 2008; Van den Steen, 2010; Kazík, 2012; Weber and Tarba, 2012). Controversially, Remanda (2016) argues culture differences/shocks cannot be ignored in a M&A, but it cannot be a factor to determine the final outcome. Also, Fiordelisi and Martelli (2011) used an organizational behaviour approach to measure corporate culture in M&A in banking found that firms with similar cultures are not significantly related to M&A success. Bargeron, Lehn and Smith (2012) pointed out that companies with strong cultures are more likely to lose their culture in large-scale M&A.

Recent research has discussed that the importance of corporate culture in M&A. It has shown that the more similar the corporate cultures, the more likely an acquirer company is to succeed in a M&A (Yoo, 2020; Doukas and Zhang, 2021). Alexandridis *et al.* (2022) discuss the role of corporate culture in M&A in 22 developed countries can be reflected by CSR data. However, Tremblay (2020) argues that the existing of positive cultural effects only if an acquirer company has a strong culture over acquired company.

Bouwman (2013) emphasises the limitation of corporate culture in M&A studies as it is lack of theories on the effect of culture on M&A. In addition, most studies in the field of corporate culture in M&A have only focused on the culture environment in geographical rather than corporate culture itself (Chakrabarti, Gupta-Mukherjee and Jayaraman, 2009; Frijns *et al.*, 2013; Ahern, Daminelli and Fracassi, 2015). While Hertel, Kaya and Reichmann (2023) measured corporate culture difference in M&A through the corporation level, the data reflects U.S. domestic M&A deals from 2009 to 2021 and a lack of understanding of the Chinese environment. In M&A, culture as an interactive process (Remanda, 2016) raise the discussion of corporate culture implication in post-M&A (Thorwid and Vinge, 2020).

2.4.2 Corporate culture implication in Post-M&A

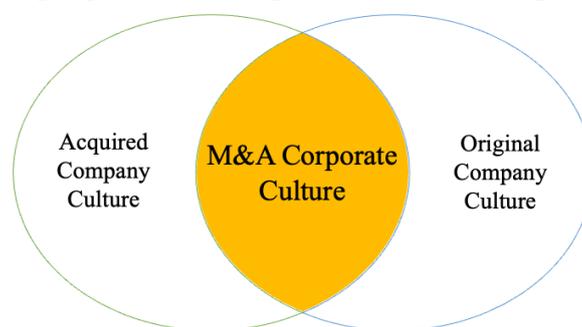
The extent and nature of the effect of M&A on corporate cultured remains a topic of debate (Barkema, Bell and Pennings, 1996; Dauber, 2012). The following will present the effects from both positive and negative views.

Research supporting the view that corporate culture plays a negative role in M&A suggests that the two existing organisational cultures may lead to hostile attitudes between the employees of acquired and acquiring company (Makhlouk and Shevchuk, 2008). In line with these findings that acquired employees are a major source of resistance to corporate culture integration in M&As (Fink and Holden, 2008). Similarly, Stahl and Voigt (2008) highlighted that different corporate culture can cause barriers to employee integration. This seems to reflect a more negative attitude to corporate culture in the acquired companies (including employees) (Thorwid and Vinge, 2020). However, Gorton and Zentefis (2023) believed corporate culture is a reflection of the company's values that presenting in the behaviour of employees and will not be changed quickly.

In contrast, it argues the presence of corporate cultural differences can improve performance (Chakrabarti, Gupta-Mukherjee and Jayaraman, 2009). Grigorios (2018) found that there was no resistance from employees who from different corporate cultures that could affect employee motivation after analysing the case studies of two major Korean airlines' acquisition. Tarba *et al.* (2019) studied Israeli high-tech firms, they found that the higher the corporate cultural differences, the more positively influence on overall acquisition performance of the acquiring firm. Chung and Park (2023) studied corporate culture in the post-merger performance of Korean airlines, they found that group-oriented corporate culture has a positive impact on employee cooperation thus producing positive results on company performance. Dauber (2012, p. 385) argues that 'management of culture differences primarily causes M&As to fail and not differences in cultural values.

This research argues that for MNEs especially M&A, the nature of their corporate culture is influenced by the culture from the acquired company and its original company's culture respectively, meanwhile those two cultures are gradually shaping M&A's corporate culture (as shown below).

Figure 2.4: Shaping M&A's Corporate Culture Diagram (Version 1)



(Developed by the researcher)

2.5 National Culture

2.5.1 Concept of the national culture

Definition of the national culture

Al-Sarayrah *et al.* (2016) emphasize that the concept of national culture to be ambiguous. Hofstede (1984a) describes national culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.’ (Hofstede, 1980, p. 25). Fukuyama (1995) argues that cultural boundaries between countries are becoming increasingly blurred with economic globalisation. Likewise Doney, Cannon and Mullen (1998) discussed that national culture refers to a characteristic of people who have similar background rather than nation States. Also, Schuler and Rogovsky (1998) discussed that the characteristic of a national culture does not mean that everyone from the same nation has that culture. At the level of the individual, national culture refers to the fact that the cultural values shared by the majority of the population are reflected in behaviours such as work (Oudenhoven, 2001; Srite and Karahanna, 2006).

Ample evidence has shown that the need to take national culture into account in human resource management research. Newman and Nollen (1996) highlighted that national cultures may lead to differences in HRM practice. Particularly, HRM in practice of parent company may be influenced by the local national culture where they operate (Khilji, 2003; Gerhart and Fang, 2005; Đorđević, 2016). Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) argued that national culture may not affect HRM as culture is a reflection of the value system within the organisation.

National culture models

Hofstede’s six-dimension culture model is the most common model in discussions of national cultural studies to understanding the national culture based on different values (Hofstede and Bond, 1984; Hofstede and Usunier, 2003; Soares, Farhangmehr and Shoham, 2007; Taras,

Steel and Kirkman, 2012). Hofstede (1980) first concludes national culture model with four dimensions, which are: individualism versus collectivism (IDV), power distance (PD), uncertainty avoidance (UA), and masculinity versus femininity (MAS). Hofstede (1991) added long versus short term orientation (LTO) as a fifth dimension to his model based on a study on Chinese values. Hofstede and Minkov (2010) identified indulgence versus restraint (IVR) as a sixth dimension to the national culture model after conducted studies across 93 countries (Hofstede, 2011). Critical view of the Hofstede national cultural model argues that the cultural framework oversimplifies the complexity of the global cultural environment and ignores the impact of domestic cultural heterogeneity (Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001). In addition, Trompenaars (1993) identified seven dimensions of national culture model which are: specific-diffuse, internal-external orientation, universalism-particularism, individualism-collectivism, achievement-ascription, and neutral-affective (Trompenaars and Woolliams, 2004). Unlike Hofstede's national culture model, Trompenaars's model is seeking to understand how employees behave during cross-cultural M&A (Trompenaars and Nijhoff Asser, 2012; Hampden-Turner, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2020).

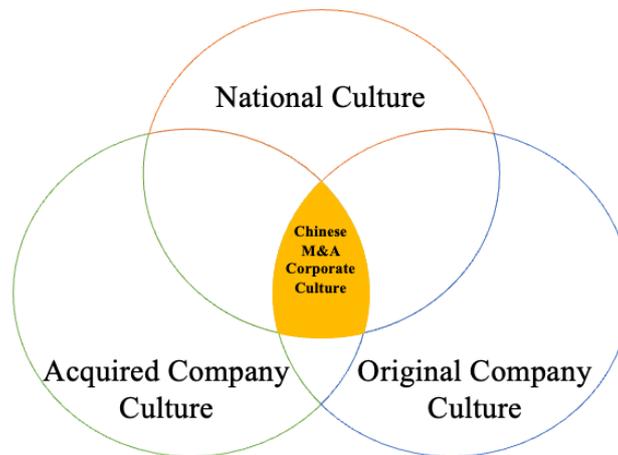
Recent research has shown that the Hofstede's dimensions for interpreting national cultures has been widely used in discussions on HRM topics (Williams and van Triest, 2009; Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Kengatharan, 2020; Knein *et al.*, 2020; Lockhart, Shahani and Bhanugopan, 2020; Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020; Gerlach and Eriksson, 2021; da Motta and Gomes, 2022; Hung, Su and Lou, 2022; Papla, Kydyr and Pak, 2022). Knein *et al.* (2020) used the Hofstede national model to test corporate culture and found that the positive relationship between organisational cultural values and cross-functional cooperation was negatively affected by the national culture's individualism and uncertainty avoidance. This inspired the idea of considering national culture as an influence on the development of

corporate culture. Lockhart, Shahani and Bhanugopan (2020) found that the use of national culture can improve the impact of high-performance HRM practices on organisational citizenship behaviours, however there is a lack of understanding of the impact of corporate culture. Although Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho (2020) examined Hofstede model that OC in areas characterised by high power distances can have a positive effect on employee supervision, the study only considered employees who work in Poland and Ukraine and lacked explanations for the situation in Asia and even China. Alofan, Chen and Tan (2020) demonstrate findings as organisational culture can counteract the negative effects of national cultural distance in MNEs, however, their research focused on Saudi Arabian subsidiaries of MNEs, and it could not transfer findings to all companies. Mansaray and Jnr (2020) highlighted in the research that national culture is not going to be changed, but it can be used in conjunction with corporate culture. It seems national culture plays moderator role that Hung, Su and Lou (2022) comparatively analysed China and Taiwan using Hofstede model, it revealed that power distance, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance moderated individual job performance; Jadil *et al.* (2023) highlighted Hofstede's national culture as a moderator in social commerce; Kengatharan (2020) confirmed that uncertainty avoidance and power distance play a moderating role in the relationship between HR practices and innovations, and future research could therefore consider whether national culture has a moderating effect on organisational culture development. Also, da Motta and Gomes (2022) found that national culture may have an impact on the existence of organisational subcultures by analysing the Brazilian public sectors. A few research has suggested that Hofstede model could explain cross-border differences in organization as national culture has an impact on CSR performance. (Griffin *et al.*, 2021; Koprowski *et al.*, 2021). Again, it needs to spot out the role of national culture in the development of corporate culture in MNEs. Arguably, Minkov and Kaasa (2021) believe that the Hofstede model is only used to reflect the actual differences between IBM's national

subsidiaries and cannot be used as a proxy for the national cultural characteristics of the corresponding countries. Likewise, Papla, Kydyr and Pak (2022) use Kazakhstan as a case study to discuss the need for companies to consider national cultural differences, but national cultural differences have little impact on HR practices. Interestingly, Williams and van Triest (2009) used the Hofstede model to highlight the influence of national culture on the decentralisation of multinational companies, which has not yet been explored in the Chinese context.

Current research is limited in that there is little focus on the relationship between national culture and HR practice in terms of corporate culture (Al-Sarayrah *et al.*, 2016). Although some studies have considered the relationship between organisational culture and national culture (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Mansaray and Jnr, 2020; Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020; da Motta and Gomes, 2022), there is still a lack of empirical findings to understand the role of national culture in the development of corporate culture. Despite it has been suggested that national cultures contribute to the development of corporate cultures in organisations and that they are directly related to each other (Konrad and Sušanj, 1999; Pun, 2001), it still lack of recent evidence to understand how national culture nurtures the development of corporate culture in organization. Therefore, this research will consider Hofstede's national culture model to investigate the role of Chinese national culture in Chinese MNEs corporate culture (as shown below).

Figure 2.5: Shaping Chinese M&A's Corporate Culture Diagram (Version 2)



(Developed by the researcher)

2.5.2 The role of Chinese national culture in corporate culture

What is Chinese national culture?

It has been highlighted that national culture as important as corporate culture in cross-border M&As that ‘when we enter in the business world, we do what make sense to us according to our national culture.’ (cited in Makhlouk and Shevchuk, 2008, p. 28). As for Chinese national culture, Fan (2000) sees Chinese culture as a unique set of core values shaped by more than 4,000 years of tradition and norms, and believes Chinese culture as the result of a combination of modern and traditional cultures. Specifically, modern Chinese culture has been shaped primarily by Chinese communist ideology and Western values (Fan, 2000), while traditional Chinese culture has been influenced by Confucianism and Taoism (Zhao, 2000). Also, Liu (2009) agrees that the core value of Confucianism has shaped Chinese traditional culture. Similarly, Kwon (2012) claimed that the influence of Confucianism may be on the whole country, not just certain regions. Liu *et al.* (2019) gave the examples that reflect traditional Chinese values such as contentedness, humility, and benevolence.

Extensive studies have been conducted to explore the Hofstede's national culture model in China.

Individualism versus collectivism:

The Chinese national culture is more inclined towards a collective culture (Fan, 2000; Tsang, 2007; Liu *et al.*, 2019; Tizard *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Ande, 2023), as people prioritise the groups interest when making decisions (Pareek and Kumar, 2020). On the other hand, previous research argues that Chinese national culture as a whole moving towards more individualism (Triandis, 1995; Leung, 2008). Triandis (1995) argues that as Chinese society becomes globalised and modernised, Chinese national culture becomes more individualistic, especially in wealthy areas. Leung (2008) concluded that China may be moving towards individualism culture, but it still tends towards collectivism in comparison with other countries. Although Hamamura *et al.* (2021) examined 50 years of data from China and found that Chinese culture did not moving towards individualism over time, they only examined data from the period 1950 to 1999. Gong *et al.* (2021, p. 17) believe that regional differences lead to cultural differences that 'South and North China are generally more inclined to collectivism, whereas the Yangzi River Basin and Northeast China are more inclined to individualism.'

Power distance:

The legacy of hierarchy has caused Chinese national culture to be characterised by strong power distance (Fan, 2000; Leung, 2008; Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Wang, 2020b; Tizard *et al.*, 2021; Lee and Ande, 2023).

Uncertainty avoidance:

Chinese national culture tends to be strong on uncertainty avoidance (Fan, 2000; Wang, 2020b; Lee and Ande, 2023), although it is also inclined to ambiguity when it comes to language (Pareek and Kumar, 2020).

Masculinity versus femininity:

Fan (2000) argues that Chinese national culture is neither masculine nor feminine and seems like a combination of both. However, recent research data shown that Chinese national culture tends to more masculinity (Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Lee and Ande, 2023).

Long term versus short term orientation:

Previous research has found that Chinese national culture is short-term orientation (or past-oriented) (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Yau, 1988; Fan, 2000). Arguably, there is growing research has found that Chinese national culture seems tend to long-term orientation (Fang, 2003; Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Zhang, Liu and District, 2020; Lee and Ande, 2023).

Indulgence versus restraint:

Existing data in the literature suggests that Chinese national culture has a low level of indulgence, due to social norms (Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Lee and Ande, 2023).

Some recent studies have perceived a link between Chinese national culture and CCP ideology but have not empirically explored it (Tsang, 2007). Tsang (2007) first emphasised that Chinese collectivist culture was influenced by the Chinese Communist Party. Andrews (2022) suggests that during the Xi Jinping era the political culture has been further strengthened through the promotion of Confucianism thus centralised power. Therefore, the existing evidence guides this research to gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese governmental environment to understand whether Chinese national culture (in terms of the State culture) influences Chinese corporate culture as a political imperative.

Chinese national culture as a political imperative

Following economic liberalisation that was supported by Deng Xiaoping and his successors, under Xi Jinping government policy has moved back in the direction of the State capitalism paradigm (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018; Davis, 2018; Blanchette, 2020; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2023; Su and Lim, 2023). State

capitalism embodies the reform process of taking more direct control of the economy and attempting to Chinese characteristic market capitalism (Bremmer, 2009; Xing and Shaw, 2013; Davis, 2018). Unlike Deng Xiaoping, communist ideology continues to be perpetuated in addition to the integration of the capitalist model in Xi Jinping's era (Brown, 2018). As China's State government has long relied on ideology, Xi Jinping's political style is imperial, republican and socialist (Cheek, 2021). A research summarised the ideology through analysis of Xi Jinping's public speeches and other sources as the concept of rights and the use of power in order to ensure that party members are fully subservient to the demands of their superiors (Lam, 2016). In other words, the ideology of Xi Jinping's administration has returned the focus to political primacy and to improving economic performance through greater unity (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018). The inclusion of Xi Jinping's ideology in the constitution in 2018 with a hybrid of Marxism and nationalism which may be used to centralise power and reduce inequality, thereby strengthening national identity in response to global challenges (Fitrah, 2022). Xi Jinping's value of governance and leadership is also seen as a highly centralised form of power to change the party system to directly control the power such as military and economic (Wang and Zeng, 2016; Li, 2022a). What is more, the constitution was amended in March 2018 by a vote at the National People Congress to remove term limits on the Chinese president, it seems to show that Xi Jinping is shaping personal political authority for authoritarian principle (He, 2018; Klimeš and Marinelli, 2018). Thus, it presents that China has a strong collectivism and high-power distance national culture, meanwhile, high power distance has been strengthened under Xi Jinping's leadership.

It can be argued that the concept of 'party-State capitalism' can better describe the Chinese economic model (Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2021). Demanding private sector loyalty to the Party is also seen as a signal that the State government is expanding the power of the Party and

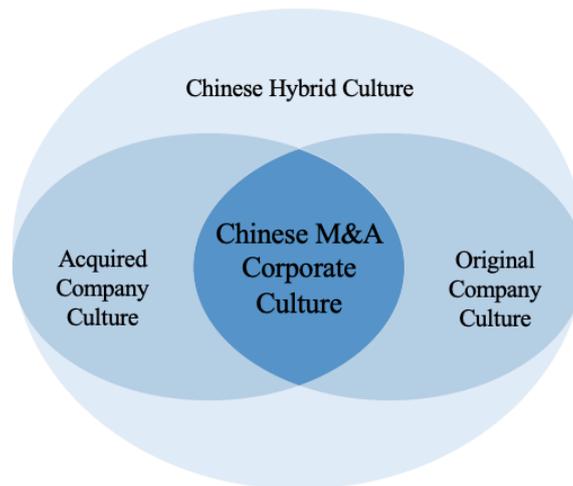
the State in corporations by requiring firms to adhere to the CCP's ideology (BBCNews, 2020; InternationalNewYorkTimes, 2020; Zhong and Stevenson, 2021; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022). A report has suggested that the CCP's control campaign extends to well-known technology companies, such as Alibaba and Tencent, also it describes as "Xi Jinping's idea is for private enterprises to get more party discipline and better to achieve China's great collective mission." (Blanchette, 2020). The evolution of State capitalism drives the blurred boundary between government and business in China (Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022). The lack of a uniform definition of the concept of State intervention in the form of State capitalism (Alami and Dixon, 2020). It argues that the State intervention consider as an unusual State-business relationship (Zhang and Whitley, 2013; Nölke, 2014a). For the State, the use of private companies is an instrument of challenge to overseas competitors, private sectors like Lenovo and Huawei have received strong support from the State (Bremmer, 2009; Davis, 2018). Lenovo's gradual globalisation strategy through cross-border acquisitions also reflects the positive response of Chinese companies to the central government's policies, as well as the support they have received to expand overseas (Deng, 2009). It argues private firms have interactions with economic rationality and governmental embeddedness that private multinationals are not entirely free from the influence of the Chinese government (Lin, 2010).

However, there are very few recent studies that consider national culture as a factor shaping of organisational corporate culture. Ergashev and Farxodjonova (2020) found that the integration of national cultures was inevitable in the process of globalisation. Guan, Deng and Zhou (2020) concluded their research that employees are more likely to be influenced by their ethnic culture than national culture and emphasised the need to consider the impact of cultural change in the future research. Leonard *et al.* (2012) State that national culture influences individual behaviour in organisations, but do not discuss whether it influences the development of their

organisational culture. Based on Leonard *et al.* (2012) research, Knein *et al.* (2020) examined the effects of organisational and national cultures on cross-functional cooperation and found that the positive effects of organisational culture on cross-functional cooperation were negatively affected by high levels of individualism and uncertainty avoidance. Thus, it is important to consider national culture when investigate the corporate culture in an organizational in China.

Arguably, the Chinese national culture is not static, but has changed in the process of globalisation development (Faure and Fang, 2008; Leung, 2008; Wong, Everett and Nicholson, 2008). Leung (2008) believes that as China becomes more modern and globalised, its cultural orientation becomes more similar to Western culture. Wong, Everett and Nicholson (2008) also believe that the development of the global economy has accelerated China's national culture to be characterised by the fusion of East and West. Faure and Fang (2008) highlighted that China is indeed flexible in assimilating external cultures in the era of globalisation, but the changes in national culture are not completely replaced by a culture of new values, but rather co-exist in Chinese culture; in other words, the traditional Chinese cultural identity constitutes a hybrid culture with the culture of "Sinicised" modernity. While body of research has been carried out over 10 years on Chinese national culture changes, much less is known about While body of research has been carried out past 15 years on Chinese national culture changes, much less is known about the impact of changing Chinese national culture on the development of a company's corporate culture. Thus, it provides an idea to understand the concept of cultural hybridity that whether the cultural hybridity of Chinese M&A grow up by the cultural hybridity in Chinese national culture (as shown below).

Figure 2.6: Shaping Chinese M&A's Corporate Culture Diagram (Version 3)



(Developed by the researcher)

2.6 Cultural Hybridity

2.6.1 The importance of cultural hybridity

What is cultural hybridity?

Originally, “hybridity” as a biological term was used to describe the results of hybridisation of plants or species (Brah and Coombes, 2000), also widely used as a discussion of botanical and biological parameters (Maturana and Varela, 1991; Young, 1995). Pioneering academics attempted to distinguish the use of hybridity from biology by attempting to use the concept of hybridity in the nineteenth century as a cultural field of study (Hall, Chambers and Curti, 1996; Gilroy, 2000). Cultural hybridity is a term used to describe the phenomenon by which a culture is transformed with differentiated elements, and it is often combined with the study of modernisation or globalisation (Kraidy, 2002; Kraidy, 2006; Fithratullah, 2019) the characteristics of cultural hybridity are also reflected in the early development of globalisation (Burke, 2009). Kraidy (2002, p. 316) described hybridity as a term that ‘has become a master trope across many spheres of cultural research, theory, and criticism.’. Nevertheless, cultural hybridity was common before industrialisation where globalisation has gamified the homogeneity of Western culture and ignored the influence of non-Western cultures

(Ackermann, 2012). Prior research has discussed the concept of hybridity and cultural hybridity (García Canclini, 1989; Werbner, 1997; Kraidy, 2002; 2004; Young, 2005; Kraidy, 2006). García Canclini (1989) provided a comprehensive understanding of the term of cultural hybridity as it is a postcolonial integration and extends to areas such as cultural politics. It seems that cultural hybridity has been labelled as postcolonial (Jacobson, 2000; Young, 2005) and transformed into an approach of shaping new forms of collective politics (Yazdiha, 2010). Hao *et al.* (2016) claimed that culture integration is one of characteristics of cultural hybridity. However, Werbner (1997, p. 15) argues that ‘All cultures are always hybrid.’. From a biological perspective, Bourguine and Stewart (2004) argue that there are two attractors in a random dynamical system. This research argues that culture as a dynamic system may also have different attractors to response different cultures, interacting like magnets. Recent research has been carried out on hybridity topic in terms of arts, education, and politics (Kramsch and Uryu, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2020; Mertania and Amelia, 2020; El Masri, 2021), much less is known about cultural hybridity as an appearance in practice within organizations. Therefore, it would be interesting to carry out research that explores whether national culture in modern China (itself hybrid) is a driving force in shaping the hybridity of corporate culture.

Cultural hybridity in China

The wave of globalisation into China in the early 20th century led to the emergence of Chinese capitalism as a hybrid capitalism (Yeung, 2004). From a political point of view, Deng Xiaoping’s approach can be regarded as representative of the “Sinicization of Marxism” (Moak *et al.*, 2015; Wang, 2020a). China’s new form of capitalism was also strengthened under Hu Jintao (Chai, 2003; Xing, 2009). Hybridity development was evident in China under Hu Jintao era; however, the concept of hybridity has become increasingly blurred under Xi Jinping era as there has been a continued reinforcement of the nationalist agenda (Johnson, 2021),

paradoxically, Xi Jinping appears to be an advocate of globalisation (De Graaff, Ten Brink and Parmar, 2020).

Although China has reformed and developed by combining free market mechanisms with Marxism, in reality, the new has grown alongside the old (Chang, 2008), and in line with Faure and Fang (2008)'s research where the cultural hybridity existed in China culture. Fitrah (2022) argues that in essential Xi's ideology is a hybrid of Marxism and nationalism. Yeung (2004) highlighted that it is important to understand the ethnic group in China before understanding the hybrid development. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics in 2019, there are 2.77 million foreigners in China and about 600,000 of them are permanent residents, and there are also close to 500,000 international students (Gudykov, 2023). It presents that China has become a form of cultural hybridity brought by globalisation. Meanwhile, Benoit (2023) indicated that the United State sees Chinese cultural hybridity development as a threaten. Hutnyk (2005) argues that cultural hybridity also emerged to mix phenomena such as difference for the development of capitalism, it therefore supporting the development of pluralist enterprises. Similarly, Zhang (2017) pointed out that the BRI is also seen as an expansion of the hybridity nature of Chinese capitalism aboard. Thus, all clues lead research to identify the relationship between cultural hybridity in organizational and cultural hybridity in China as a whole.

Cultural hybridity in organisation

Cultural hybridity is a component that cannot be ignored in international business (Jia, Rutherford and Lamming, 2016). Especially, it could be a model that improve the ability to interact between headquarters and subsidiaries (Yu, 2008). As multinational companies grow, HRM seeks to balance global integration and adaption between host country and local needs (Yavuz, 2009). Zhang (2012a) adapted Hofstede model to M&A corporate culture and found

that the OC of case study company is moving towards the integration of Chinese and American cultures. Shimoni (2011) argues that the management of cultural hybridity is very similar to OC, but different in nature. Cultural hybridity is characterised in HRM by the transfer of management strategy to each other in different culture (Karlsson and Norstedt, 2017). Although the topic of cultural hybridity having been discussed more these years, there still is a question mark on the recognition of hybrid culture in organization, such as the types of hybrid culture.

A considerable body of research has been carried out on the cross-cultural management of HRM (Minbaeva, Hutchings and Thomson, 2007; Zhu, Warner and Rowley, 2007; Xiao and Cooke, 2020), yet much less is now about the role that cultural hybridity play in CMNE company's HRM in terms of corporate culture. To date, the cultural hybridity in organization has received scant attention in there research literature (Ge and Zhao, 2020; Gratton, 2021; Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021). Although Gratton (2021) discusses the impact of hybrid ways of working on corporate culture during the epidemic and finds that a hybrid model of HRM needs to support the OC, it still lack of understanding in China context. Ge and Zhao (2020) found that hybrid systems significantly and positively affect the effectiveness of HRM, but their study is in the perspective of foreign-invested enterprises in the Chinese market and lacks the understanding of domestic Chinese firms. Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya (2021) claimed that organisational structure has a direct impact on the degree of hybrid in a firm, thus extending the existence of a cultural hybridity in the form of an organisational subculture. Yousfi (2021) critiques the fact that national cultures can be overlooked when considering the cultural hybridity of multinational organisations. Thus, it is important to do empirical research to understand current State of cultural hybridity in Chinese MNEs in order to identify whether the fact of cultural hybridity in organizational due to the cultural hybridity environment in China.

2.6.2 *The importance of convergence*

What is convergence?

Before discussing the convergence theory, it is necessary to distinguish the difference between hybrid and convergence. According to Oxford dictionary, the hybrid refers to the product of mixing two or more different things, and the convergence refers to the process of becoming very similar or the same. In essence, therefore, hybrid is the situation in which the two coexist, while convergence is the situation in which they gradually merge. Convergence theory is widely discussed in social science research, whether in political studies, educational systems or otherwise (Bennett, 1991; Drezner, 2001; Holzinger and Knill, 2005; Inkeles, 2019; Arzhanovskaya, Eltanskaya and Generalova, 2021). In the 1960's the logic of industrialism were put forward, arguing that the growth of industrialisation had led to similarities in the characteristics of industrialised societies in many countries whether it is a capitalist or communist society (Kerr *et al.*, 1960). Rostow (1990) argues that convergence theory is seen as the Western model that developing countries must follow in developing their modernisation process. Mahubani (2013) highlighted the importance of convergence in his book called *The Great Convergence*, he believes that downplaying nationalism is not a negative thing, and that greater convergence can counteract global crises from energy and environmental pollution, it also allows for the rapid development of a global free market economy. The explanation given in the recent literature for the understanding of cultural convergence spots more in the study of multiculturalism and cultural integration (Ergashev and Farxodjonova, 2020; Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). Thus, it is important to understand convergence in national culture and organizational culture.

Convergence in China

China, the world's second largest economy, was unanimously approved by the US House of Representatives to remove the "developing country" label in 2023 (Benoit, 2023). Trade

openness and ease of entrepreneurship are two important determinants of a country's ability to narrow the gap with developed countries (Altman, 2013). Although there is not enough literatures evidence to prove that China is politically convergence with the Western system, it is reflected in business and education (Sui and Tan, 1995; Jin, 2007; Ryan, 2011; Tan and Chua, 2015; Hayhoe, 2017). In the business, the theory of the Western marketing mix is combined with the logic of the Chinese Sun Tzu's Art of War and applied to business strategy (Sui and Tan, 1995). Some studies suggest that Chinese educational philosophies and models are learnt from overseas (Jin, 2007; Hayhoe, 2017). What is more, China's education reforms over the last decade have also reflected signs of convergence with the education policies of Western countries (Ryan, 2011; Tan and Chua, 2015). Clarke (2020) argues that the BRI is a product of the convergence of China's foreign policy and domestic politics. Recent research spots attention on convergence in HRM in China (Cooke, Schuler and Varma, 2020; Froese *et al.*, 2020; Rowley and Oh, 2020; Warner, 2020) as HRM was a very new concept in the 1950s and it is interesting to illustrate the convergence of cultural differences between China and the West in terms of HRM.

Convergence in organisation

HRM in China is evolving dynamically and Chinese HRM practices are both converging or diverging from Western HRM under different political contexts (Zhang and Bartol, 2010; Zhao and Du, 2012; Zhou, Zhang and Liu, 2012; Tu and Lu, 2013; Warner, 2013; Cooke, 2014; Nie *et al.*, 2015; Zhu and Warner, 2019). Warner (2000) claimed convergence-divergence theory divides Chinese HRM logic into 4 categories, which are hard convergence, soft convergence, soft divergence, and hard divergence. The main factors influencing convergence-divergence are the forces of globalisation, political ideology, major labour markets and other factors (Budhwar, Varma and Patel, 2016). HRM in China in the 1950s was seen as personnel administration, which was different from the West (Zhao, 1994; Warner, 1995; 2003).

Prior research not only has there been a great deal of academic discussion on the development of HRM in China, but also on the practical application of Western HRM theories and models, such as Taylor Scientific Management (Cooke, 2009; Zheng and Lamond, 2009; Zheng, 2013; Busse, Warner and Zhao, 2016). Kerr *et al.* (1960) discussed that enterprises need to converge and thus sustain their competitive advantage in the global economy. Yavuz (2009) argues that although there are cultural differences, the convergence of management practices is an eventually consequence in the context of globalisation. Whist recent research has been carried out on convergence in China HRM (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Cooke, Schuler and Varma, 2020; Mishra and Sohani, 2020; Warner, 2020; Chi, 2021; Lakshman *et al.*, 2022; Malik *et al.*, 2022), much less is known about how actually convergence in term of OC. Froese *et al.* (2020) discuss that although Chinese MNEs tend to adopt nationalism driven OC, cultural convergence clearly exists but in complex dynamic form.

There is the need for empirical evidence to deep understand hybridity and convergence in the practice of HRM in terms of OC in CMNEs. Similarly, convergence in the practice of HRM is dynamic under cultural hybridity in China. This research will therefore first identify whether there is a cultural hybridity in Lenovo and to understand the process of how cultural hybridity developing.

[2.7 Literature Gap and Theoretical Framework in this Research](#)

2.7.1 Research Gap

This research seeks to fill the gaps in corporate culture in Chinese multinationals in terms of the how does corporate culture influenced by global and national factors. Recent research brings an attention on understanding the corporate culture in CMNEs (Froese *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021b; Tang and Zhang, 2021), it seems that CMNEs through cross-border mergers and

acquisitions receive more significant influence from cultural factors (Yang *et al.*, 2022). Thus, it is important to update the understanding of the corporate culture of CMNEs through M&A. In China context, Lenovo became an ideal case company due to the company's high-profile acquisition to the global arena from a traditional private company to a CMNE (Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023). Also, Lenovo fits the definition of a Chinese MNE, which has gained market share overseas through rapid acquisitions (Rashidin *et al.*, 2020), while receiving the home country effects in terms of intangible support from the Chinese government (Lenovo was initially funded by the National Research Institute). Thus, this research is taking Lenovo as a case study to understanding the nature of corporate culture in CMNE.

Studies exploring the Lenovo-IBM M&A from a corporate culture perspective are mainly dated five years ago (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Kang, 2015; Zhang and Wang, 2015; Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2016; Cui *et al.*, 2016; Yu, Dang and Motohashi, 2019). Ng *et al.* (2012) argued the fact that Lenovo's corporate culture was not updated after its acquisition of IBM PC business, it reflects that Confucian traits under Chinese culture are still present in Lenovo. There is a lack of more recent views on Lenovo's evolving corporate culture. Zhang and Wang (2015) discussed the culture conflict in Lenovo's cross-border M&A in terms of the time factor and found that cross-border M&A is the growth point of culture conflict and shows an inverted "U" curve development. It provides an idea to investigate the conflict in Lenovo's corporate culture from culture perspective. Zhang and Kang (2015) found that the success of an M&A depends on whether the corporate culture can achieve effective synergistic effect through comparative analyses of Chinese cross-border M&A cases. Again, there needs to be an update of evidence on how far Lenovo's corporate culture has been shaped nearly 20 years after the acquisition closed. Abdulai and Ibrahim (2016) discussed the challenges through a qualitative approach that national cultural differences are the one of challenges facing cultural in tgration between

Lenovo's corporate culture and IBM's corporate culture. This is the argument that assumes that national culture is conventionally embedded in corporate culture. (Gorton and Zentefis, 2020). It suggests national culture is one of aspects to shape Lenovo's corporate culture. Cui *et al.* (2016) argued that although Lenovo considered bi-directional acculturation, representatives of the two companies continued to hold contrasting views at the same time. It needs an updated explanation of the extent to which the legacy of IBM's corporate culture still exists in Lenovo's current corporate culture. Although Yu, Dang and Motohashi (2019) discussed the extent of knowledge transfer after the Lenovo M&A, the study lacked an understanding of culture as one part of knowledge transfer.

In addition, research suggests that it needs to bring an attention on Lenovo's corporate culture development, especially in post-epidemic period (Sanchez, Joshi and Mudde, 2020; Tang, 2022; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023; Xu, 2024). Sanchez, Joshi and Mudde (2020) argued that the identity of the acquired IBM employee is likely to be deeply rooted in the original corporate culture. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence to show how far IBM's corporate culture is embedded in current Lenovo's corporate culture. Tang (2022) discusses two Chinese cross-border M&A cases finding that very different national cultures and corporate cultures affect the management style of the whole company and suggests that future research needs to consider cases in different industries such as IT companies. (Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023) emphasised that Lenovo is shaping its global identity by promoting a collaboration culture to reduce cultural differences. This suggests research could explore the extent to which collaborative culture promotes employee integration. Although Xu (2024) understands how Lenovo circumvents conflicts from corporate and national cultures in cross-border M&A and integration from a strategic HR perspective, it lacks an in-depth exploration of the development of its culture hybridity.

Similarly, Tarba *et al.* (2020) emphasised the importance of corporate culture in Lenovo's M&A through a human resource management perspective, thus this research will consider to leverage human resource strategy perspective to explore the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture. Therefore, this thesis is not an attempt to update the understanding of Lenovo's corporate culture in the context of M&A, but rather to focus more on the current corporate culture in order to determine whether its corporate culture has changed and what factors may be shaping its corporate culture.

Thus, the literature gap in this thesis is there is lack of understanding of the nature of current corporate culture in Lenovo as what elements shape its cultural hybridity as follows:

Firstly, although some studies have discussed the cultural hybridity in firms (Zhang, 2012a; Jia, Rutherford and Lamming, 2016; Karlsson and Norstedt, 2017; Gratton, 2021; Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021; Yousfi, 2021), they do not provide a clear explanation of how cultural hybridity develops. This research argues that cultural hybridity may be a dynamic evolution involved over time, and Lenovo's cultural hybridity has not been studied. Therefore, this research will conduct a case study of Lenovo to explore the cultural hybridity development in the company almost 20 years after the acquisition was completed, in order to understand the development of its cultural hybridity and thus seek to explore the elements of current cultural hybridity.

Secondly, although Lenovo developed hybrid culture features as a result of acquiring IBM's PC business as the need for cultural integration (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Kang, 2015; Zhang and Wang, 2015; Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2016; Cui *et al.*, 2016), however there has been a lack

of discussion of the nature of Lenovo's cultural hybridity and its evolution. This research argues that the cultural hybridity may not be understood simply as mixed culture or cultural integration as it may be a cultural tendency dominated by dominant cultural elements in different stages. In other words, are the elements that now shape Lenovo's cultural hybridity consistent with the acquisition phase. This research argues that the elements that shape Lenovo's cultural hybridity may be unlikely to change completely, what may change is the influence of different cultural attractors on Lenovo's cultural hybridity.

Thirdly, most studies highlight the influence of national culture on corporate culture (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Guan, Deng and Zhou, 2020; Knein *et al.*, 2020; Mansaray and Jnr, 2020; Szydło and Grześ-Bukłaho, 2020; da Motta and Gomes, 2022), but there is a lack of discussion on how national culture is "embedded" in corporate culture. This research argues that national domestic culture, reinforced by government, may as a cultural attractor gradually "expand" political control by "reshaping" the current Lenovo corporate culture. Thus, this research will observe how its corporate culture reflects national culture characteristics in practice. It is important to emphasise that the identity of the national culture will be explored from the basis of the policy context of Xi Jinping's administration, including the political environment and policy reforms.

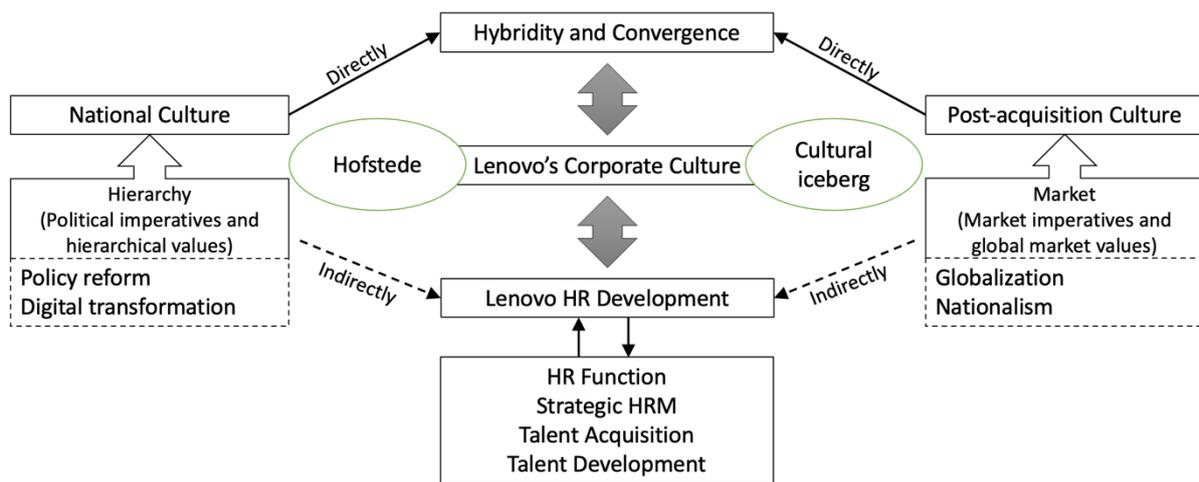
Lastly, from research methodology perspective, prior research about culture topic is focusing on quantitative methods to examine (Tsang, 2007; Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Wang, 2015; Pareek and Kumar, 2020). It lacks in-depth understanding from empirical study of how and why the corporate culture changes, especially, the evolution of cultural hybridity in corporate culture.

According to the above research gaps, this research develops research question as ‘to what extent does Lenovo have hybrid culture?’. To address the core research question, there are two sub research question which are ‘What is Lenovo’s HR strategy?’, and ‘To what extent is Lenovo’s HR strategy transnational?’. Therefore, all research questions are supporting to gain the research aims where understanding the nature of Lenovo’s corporate culture, and the evolution of Lenovo’s cultural hybridity.

2.7.2 Theoretical framework

Van Thiel (2014) claimed that the theoretical framework provides guidance to the research, and the theoretical framework of this thesis is shown as below:

Figure 2.7: Theoretical framework of this thesis



(Developed by the researcher)

The theoretical framework indicates that the root of this thesis is Lenovo’s corporate culture where exploring the nature of Lenovo’s corporate culture today. The research provides an in-depth understanding of what are the components to shape the cultural hybridity by exploring the role of cultural hybridity in Lenovo’s corporate culture. The research starts from two perspectives, one is using Hofstede’s National Culture Model to explore the case company’s cultural hybridity, as based on the understanding of Hofstede model, the key theory concluded

from Hofstede's IBM research was national side is important to multinationals, however, this research brings attention on Lenovo case study to explore whether national side as important as Hofstede's believed. Another perspective is to understand whether Lenovo's corporate culture is influenced by globalism or nationalism through the iceberg model, which in-depth understanding the surface culture and underneath culture of Lenovo.

Based on the discussion of hybridity and convergence concepts in the previous sections, the existence of cultural hybridity in China is becoming ambiguous, but it may influence the nature of Chinese business management models and corporate culture. At the same time, cultural hybridity in China has never been fixed, but dynamically changing. In other words, if the influence of hierarchical forces intensifies, the tendency for hybrid cultures to be dominated by hierarchical factors could therefore lead to a corporate culture that takes greater account of hierarchical factors, as well as HR strategies. However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the impact of either hierarchical forces or market forces on the development of both Lenovo's corporate culture and HR strategy. Therefore, the impact of hierarchy and market forces on the development of Lenovo's HR department can be demonstrated indirectly through the interplay between the hybrid culture and the management model.

This research is going to in-depth understanding the cultural hybridity in Lenovo. The one of research gaps is lack of empirical evidence, thus, this research will be addressed using the qualitative method where presented in the next chapter to clarify why and how the method will be conducted in this thesis.

2.8 Conclusion

To sum up, ample evidence exists to support the view that the corporate culture in post-M&A is complicated as the corporate culture is never fixed. Meanwhile, the scholars are beginning

to acknowledge the importance of national culture in corporate culture. Recent research has gradually paid more attention on cultural hybridity in organization, however, much less study is researched in Lenovo, as well as in China context. Therefore, this thesis attempts to understand the cultural hybridity in Lenovo in terms of national culture and global culture orientations. Specifically, the theoretical framework suggests that both national culture and global culture are continually shaping Lenovo's cultural hybridity, and the relationship between these two influences is the subject to research.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodology of this research and the research design to address the research question. As discussed in Introduction Chapter, the main research question in this research is ‘To what extent does Lenovo have hybrid culture?’ and includes two questions, which are ‘What is Lenovo’s strategy?’ and ‘To what extent is Lenovo’s HR strategy transnational?’. This research conducts a single case study to interpret the data which collected from qualitative methods. This chapter is divided into five sections, as following:

SECTION	CONTENT
3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the research philosophical assumptions of this research.• Demonstrate the research approach to this research.• Justify the research strategy and method of this research.
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present how the research was developed, including the justifications of choosing observation as participant, interview, and secondary data.• Introduce how the data will be collected via observation, interview, and secondary data.
3.4 RESEARCH ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data analysis describes how the data will be analysed via thematic and triangulation approaches.
3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethical consideration shows potential ethical issues in this research, as well as demonstrates the strategy of how to avoid or reduce the harm to participants.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The essence of the research is through systematic collection and interpretation of data (Walliman and Walliman, 2005). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) proposed a concept of research onion (see [Figure 3.1](#)), which is a comprehensive research method to construct the research and develop the research design (Melnikovas, 2018). For researchers, more practical question like “Why conducting research?” requires a philosophical justification (Holden and Lynch, 2004). Ontology is concerned with nature of reality and an understanding of the world such as whether social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003; Holden and Lynch, 2004; Ritchie *et al.*, 2013; Van Thiel, 2014; Hiller, 2016). Epistemology concerns the nature of the knowledge that represent how knowledge should be investigated and what acceptable knowledge should investigate in field (Crotty, 1998; Honderich, 2005; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Maynard, 2013; Ritchie *et al.*, 2013; Van Thiel, 2014; Al-Ababneh, 2020). Axiology refers to the role of values and ethics that what role do researcher’s values play in the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003; 2007; 2009). In addition, De Groot (1969) outlined an empirical cycle of research, this diagram (see [Figure 3.2](#)) has shown social science research usually starts with a problem, whether that problem is derived from theoretical knowledge or a practical problem. This will raise the question of how to design a research after understanding the research philosophy, for instance, whether the study should develop a deductive or inductive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Based on the choice of research approach, the research strategy reflects the overall planning of the research and demonstrates how the research questions will be addresses and how the research objectives can be achieved (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Al-Ababneh, 2020). Based on the selection of research approach and strategy, the researcher should consider what kind of research methods to use (Creswell and Creswell, 1994; Williams, 2007; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Ritchie *et al.*, 2013; Van Thiel, 2014).

3.2.1 Philosophical assumptions

This research aims to understand whether the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture has been influenced by national culture and post-acquisition culture from a cultural perspective. This represents a position that culture is a continuous interactive process, and that the nature and embodiment of culture varies in different Chinese MNEs. In the case of organisational culture, the objectivist sees it as something that the organisation 'has', however, the subjectivist sees culture as a result of the continuing social development (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Smircich (2017) believed that organisational culture is a variable created through a complex range of phenomena. For this study, understanding the changing subjective realities can help the research to comprehensively construct the culture 'interactive processes' from different perspectives. Thus, if culture is to be truly understood, it is necessary to understand how the participants within the organisation give meaning to the phenomenon of culture (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Therefore, this research takes subjectivism as an ontology assumption.

As for the epistemology, culture is a root of whole study throughout, through the researcher's interaction with the participants in the organisation thereby understanding the social phenomena in the organisation through different perspectives, this process does not lend itself to theorising by definite rules. Similarly, the situation of each Chinese MNE is unique and complex, thus, relying on interpretivist assumption can help research to better understand the complexity and uniqueness of knowledge. The interpretivist perspective is also seen as appropriate for business and management studies, particularly human resource management (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Therefore, this research leans more towards an interpretivism as an epistemology assumption.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) and Al-Ababneh (2020), this research is value bound due to the researcher is part of what is being researched as the interpretations and reflection from researcher is a key to contribution. Therefore, more justifications will be clarified in the following chapter (Section 3.3) and reflecting how the researcher's values have developed research.

3.2.2 Research approach

In this research, the literature gaps indicate that there is a lack of research involving a corporate cultural perspective to explore the impact of national and global sides on the Lenovo's cultural hybridity, while much of the attention has been focused on economic systemic factors, the culture of the Lenovo themselves also appears to be affected. However, the internal culture elements within Lenovo have not been observed and discussed, the research of this topic is necessarily exploratory in nature. Therefore, an inductive approach was chosen in this research by developing a theory as a finding of the data analysis, for example, exploring what has or has not changed in the culture of Lenovo.

3.2.3 Research strategy

In this research, the aim of research addresses the 'what' and 'how' questions and attempting to explore and understand whether the nature of Lenovo has shifted culturally in the process of China's digital transformation. For the research itself, it is not possible to explore the context of all Chinese MNEs, as there are differences in the scale of operations and management styles of Chinese MNEs (Hawes and Chew, 2011; Lou and Liu, 2020). Thus, the case study strategy is applicable to this research because of its uniqueness in the context of China's digital transformation while the process of digital transformation is a part of political imperatives. At the beginning of the research, Lenovo and Huawei were used as multiple (homogenous set) case study for comparative analysis because both companies have similar experience in terms

of size, business, and development and both went into multinational development as Chinese private companies. However, the US-China trade war that started in 2019 made it difficult to collect data from Huawei, thus this was one of the reasons why the final research strategy chose to take Lenovo as a single case study. Second reason of choosing Lenovo as a single case study was that even though Huawei and Lenovo have similar experiences, Huawei is seen as a company controlled by the Chinese State that operates overseas while Lenovo is more global in character (Zaagman, 2017). The last reason was that Lenovo as a typical Chinese MNEs, although through its high-profile acquisition Lenovo has gradually become a typical example of China's embrace of globalisation, the nature of Lenovo itself as a Chinese company cannot be ignored. Although there are many studies on Lenovo's cross-cultural management (Peng, 2008; Ng *et al.*, 2012; Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2016; Cui *et al.*, 2016; Michailova, Holden and Paul, 2020), the development and change of its culture is unknown in the context of digital transformation. Therefore, it is valuable to research Lenovo as a unique case study and in line with the research aim.

3.2.4 Research method

As discussed in the previous chapters (Introduction and Literature Review), this research is based on a corporate culture disciplinary perspective to explore the nature of Lenovo's cultural hybridity, by investigating how cultural changes reflect its being affected from both national culture and global sides. Due to the nature of qualitative method as a means to explore social phenomena from the perspective of social actors, in this research the embodiment of culture within the company will be reflected through the perspective of the employees, therefore a qualitative method is more in line with the objectives of this research. According to the choice of research strategy and research method, the next section will justify how the research design was developed.

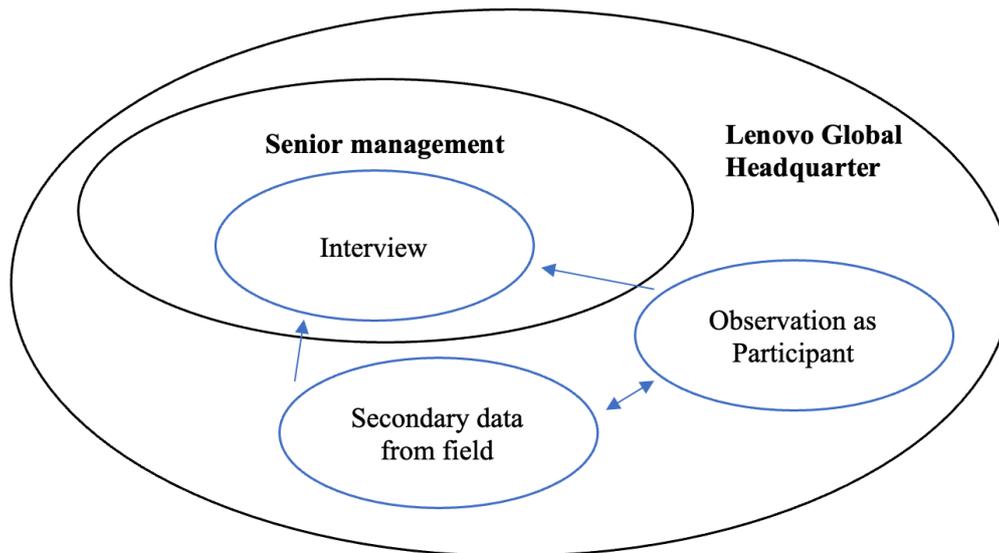
In conclusion, the research philosophy of this research can be summarised as follows:

Philosophical Assumptions	Research Approach	Research strategy	Research Method
Subjectivism			
Interpretivism	Inductive approach	Single case study	Qualitative method
Value bound			

3.3 Research Design

Bechhofer and Paterson (2012) describe the research design as ‘Designing a piece of empirical research requires the researcher to decide on the best ways of collecting data in research locales which will permit meaningful and insightful comparison.’ (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013, p. 50). Single case study collection techniques will combine a variety of approaches such as interviews, observation, and document analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Triangulation is widely used in qualitative research and refers to the use of two or more independent sources of data in a study to provide a more comprehensive answer to answer the research question, thus, triangulation is believed to increase the credibility and validity of the research (Thurmond, 2001; Triangulation, 2014; Flick, 2018).

Figure 3.3 Research design for this research



(Developed by the researcher)

This research design figure (above Figure 3.3) presents the steps of the fieldwork in different circles where the black circles are places that the data mainly come from. The blue circles illustrate the way how the data will be collected by steps that collecting observation data and secondary data at the same time, and then to collect interview data. Thus, this research adopts data triangulation by using data from different time, place, and people. In the following sections will be justified how data is collected in each of these three approaches.

Observation as participant

In this research, the research question is focusing on the HR strategy and culture in Lenovo which reflects that the research objective is related to people's behaviour, therefore the intended purpose of observation techniques in this case can help the researcher to discover what employees do in the reality. In other words, observations not only provide an understanding of the true phenomenon of Lenovo's HR strategies, but also reflect the behavioural manifestations of its cultural perspectives by observing its employees. Indeed, most of the research related to Lenovo dwells on cross-border acquisition discussion, and only one piece of literature in recent

years has been a research of innovation in human resource management (Xu *et al.*, 2023). According to typology of participant observation researcher roles (see [Figure 3.4](#)), this research is adopting observation as participant to collect and analysis data. Thus, the added benefits of undertaking observation are not only ensuring the validity and reliability of the data through empirical research, while understanding the true atmosphere by being there.

The nature of the observation in this research is reflected in the researcher's description of where and what was happening and who was involved by recording daily working diary as a method used to record. The location will be centred on Lenovo's global headquarters in terms of HR department, and the majority of those involved will be drawn from the global HR employees. The reason for recording data in diary is that Delbridge and Kirkpatrick (1994) argued that observed data are categorised as "primary", "secondary" and "experiential", and that diary allows for the recording of data as perceived by the researcher in the present moment and allows for the interpretation of the data itself.

In this research, one of objectives is to understand the culture and HR strategies in Lenovo through employee's behaviour, and the researcher will be gaining access to organisation for research via internship in global HR department. Thus, this research conducts observer as participant technique via 3-month fieldwork at Lenovo global headquarters. The ethical issues related to observation as participant technique of data collection will be introduced in ethical consideration section.

Addition information about how the researcher conducted observation as participant after the fieldwork:

The researcher first had a video interview with the Organizational Development (OD) team manager where was asked about education background and the purpose of doing internship. After the researcher explained what was about the research, the manager offered the internship contract (From 1st June 2021 to 1st August 2021) in the following week. Just as the internship was coming to an end, the researcher was asking for another month of internship, and the manager agreed. During internship, researcher was recorded the key things of occurrence as a daily working diary, while left the reflection in the end. In the first few weeks, the researcher kept taking notebook to office to record key information timely, however, it was not last since some of colleagues became deliberate in their behaviour. Thus, the researcher left notebook at home and updated the data after work. Eventually, the data include the physic environment, the main participants activities, employees' emotions. The "primary" data from observation was what happened, the "experiential" was how researcher interpreted what happened, and the "secondary" data was externally disclosed information where posted in internal website.

Interviews

In this research, the research question firstly seeks to understand the content of Lenovo's HR strategy, and secondly explores how employees' behaviours and perceptions reflect their cultural perspectives. The research tends to conduct exploratory and explanatory research questions, consequently, semi-structured interview may better answer research questions. The semi-structured interview in this research conducts fixed themes which are Government change, Company strategy, and HR strategy. The Government change theme aims to understand how participants perceive the political imperative, in other words, to what extent did participants perceive that government culture has an indirect or direct impact on Lenovo's culture. The Company strategy theme aims to clarify whether Lenovo's current positioning still has its sights set on global development. The last theme is to explore how participants understand the

implementation of HR strategy. The themes are also divided into different sub-themes, as well as the interview questions have been coded under different sub-themes, it shows as following:

Figure 3.5 Interview themes and potential interview questions

Themes	Sub-themes	Interview questions
Government change	Digital Transformation	What do you see the digital transformation of the Chinese government?
		How do you see the smart city development?
	Development	What kind of challenge and opportunity can this bring to Lenovo?
	Policy reform	What do you think is the direction of China's talent development?
		What do you think is the impact of the changes in HR policy on Lenovo?
Company strategy	Overall strategy	Which of the following types of companies do you think Lenovo belongs to (International/ Globalisation/ Transnational)? And why?
		How would you describe the company overall strategy?
		What factors should be considered when developing company's strategy?
		Do different parts of the company have different priority role? And how?
		What are the opportunities and challenges that Lenovo's climbs 65 places on Fortune Global 500 in 2021 will present?
	Influence factors	What factors are influencing the Lenovo's globalisation?
		What do you find the most difficult to work in Lenovo?
HR strategy	Main principles	What are the main principles of HR in Lenovo?
	Organizational culture	What is Lenovo's organizational culture?
		What organizational culture activities are available in Lenovo?
		What factors will influence on organizational culture?
		What factors need to be considered for the integration of organizational culture?
		Do different departments/teams have different values? What is the impact on organizational culture?
	Talent acquisition	What are Lenovo's external recruitment channels?
		What are Lenovo's internal recruitment channels?
	Training	What kind of on-board training will Lenovo provide?
		What kind of on-the-job training will Lenovo provide?
	Motivation	Which incentives do you think will have an impact on you?
		What rewards are available at Lenovo?
	Organizational structure	Do you agree that Lenovo is a top-down model?
		What is the impact of the top-down model on your work?

(Developed by the researcher)

The format of interview in this research is to conduct online-interview via Zoom due to the difficulty to access private meeting rooms. Each interview takes about one and half hours and will be recorded via Zoom on laptop (as a backup) and Just Press Record on Apple watch (as a textual transcript).

As for sample selection, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) sampling framework (see [Figure 3.6](#)), the probability sampling method was not chosen due to the researcher could not access the overall sample of all employees who working in Lenovo. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest a flow chart of selecting a non-probability sampling technique (see [Figure 3.7](#)), research should undertake non-probability sampling in terms of self-selection sampling after answering the questions according to the flow chart. As for sample size, this research is not able to minimise error by having as large sample size as possible in quantitative research since the identity of the target participants as department managers (potential senior management) who familiar with human resource management. Thus, the target sample size in this research is 15 participants who from HR department or other business department. Ideally, the process of selecting the participants is mainly based on finding suitable interviewees who are interested in the research through the personal relationships during the internships, while the researcher also considered using LinkedIn to search potential participants. The ethical issues related to interview technique of data collection will be introduced in ethical consideration section.

Addition information about how the researcher selected participants for interview after the fieldwork:

In practice, researcher found that selecting suitable participants went smoothly, however, it was a challenge when some of potential respondents politely declined for some reasons even if they were interested in the research itself. Considering the relevance and validity of the interview data, this research eventually interviewed 11 participants, whose identities will also be anonymised. The summary of interview participants in this research are as shown below:

Figure 3.8 Summary of interview participants



(Developed by the researcher)

Secondary data

In this research, the reason for undertaking secondary data as data collection technique is that it could provide multidimensional information that has already been collected as a reference for research data, thus helping the researcher to collect more relevant primary data during fieldwork. Similarly, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) believes that re-analysis of secondary data can also lead to unexpected findings and concluded the classification of secondary data (see [Figure 3.9](#)). Therefore, secondary data in this research will be sourced from documentary data where Lenovo’s internal public information website in addition to existing academic journals and public records, including corporate news for promotional purposes and

reports on what is happening within the organisation. As some of the secondary data comes from the organisation’s internal ‘databases’, it will be necessary for the researcher to gain access and permission to use it. For more ethical issue will be illustrated in the ethical consideration section.

Addition information about how the researcher collected secondary data after the fieldwork:

The researcher firstly obtained data from publicly available corporate news during the internship via internal communication websites. Secondly, the most important source of secondary data was the book *The Lenovo Way* (which will be described in the Finding Chapter on how it was obtained), which contains a great information of views and experiences sharing from former Senior Vice President of global human resource of Lenovo. Finally, the researcher obtained public interview transcripts through the internet.

Overall, the research design of this research can be summarised as follows:

Research Design	
Observation as participant	3 months internship at Lenovo Global Headquarters
Interview	11 participants from six different business groups
Secondary data	Desk-research

3.4 Data Analysis

As for non-numerical or unquantifiable data, Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) recommend using qualitative data analysis software (such as NVivo, CAQDAS and others) to understand the meaning of the data. As mentioned earlier, using an inductive approach is a better fit with research aims, thus we should consider using an inductive approach procedure to analyse data. There are multiple inductively based analytical procedures, such as template

analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory and others (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This research will use inductively based analytical procedure combined with triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings as data will be collected from different techniques (observation as participant, interviews, and secondary data) during the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Al-Ababneh, 2020).

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis refers to a method to identifying, analysing and interpreting qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) discussed that thematic analysis method could analysing rich data in an inductive or deductive approach. It argues that the form of inductively based thematic analysis (bottom-up) has some similarities to grounded theory as the themes are highly engaged to the data (Patton, 1990; Frith and Gleeson, 2004). The thematic analysis emphasises the process of coding and theme development and is characterised by flexibility as interpreting data will not affect by predetermined theories (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2012; 2017; Terry *et al.*, 2017). In this research, there was a lack of thematic coding system samples related to the research of Lenovo’s corporate culture; thus, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted for this research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) defined the phases of thematic analysis (see [Figure 3.10](#)) the phase of thematic analysis in this research concluded as shown below:

Figure 3.11 Thematic analysis phases of this research

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Description of process</i>
<i>Familiarizing data</i>	Transcribe observation data and transcript interview data: As for observation data, the researcher would manually transcribe working diary into NVivo. The recorded interviews will first be transcript into Words documents in readable form, and then copy to NVivo after double check with recordings. The secondary data will also in a Words documents and input to

	<p>NVivo. Before coding, the researcher will re-read all transcripts in NVivo and make sure all data were collected in correct.</p>
<p><i>Generating initial codes</i></p>	<p>Code all data in systematic manner:</p> <p>In this phase, the researcher is going to do open coding while reading transcripts and using colour coding to make sure same code in line with each other from different documents.</p>
<p><i>Searching for themes</i></p>	<p>Categorise codes into different themes:</p> <p>The researcher would read all transcripts for the second time for axial coding that focusing on the existing codes to identify most important codes from open coding thus categorising the codes to form an initial thematic map. the codes to form an initial thematic map.</p>
<p><i>Reviewing themes</i></p>	<p>Generate a thematic map of analysis:</p> <p>During this stage, the researcher would conduct a third reading of the transcripts based on the initial thematic map with the aim of checking the relevance of the codes and data under each theme and the coherence between the themes.</p>
<p><i>Defining themes</i></p>	<p>Double check the themes:</p> <p>The researcher will review the coded data and themes one last time to finally confirm that the theme names are consistent with answering the research questions.</p>
<p><i>Producing the report</i></p>	<p>Analysis selected extracts and write up the report (mainly in Discussion Chapter).</p>

(Developed by the researcher)

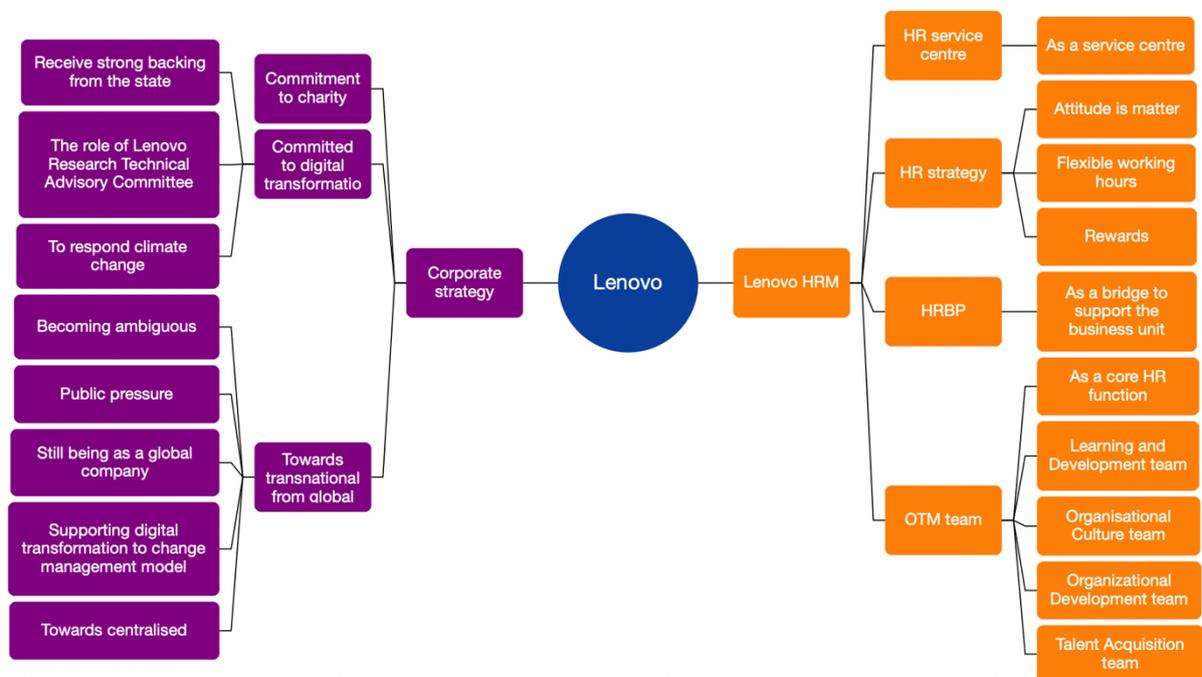
3.4.2 Data analysis of observation

For the data collected from observation as participant technique, the handwritten diary as an import data was transcribed manually on NVivo in date order. In this stage, the partly secondary data was also transcribed under observation category since those data (such as news, posts, and

advertisement) were collected during internship via internal platform as they reflected what was happening at that time.

Coding observation as participant data plays vital role in qualitative data analysis (Musante and DeWalt, 2010). This research done data cleaning after transcribed data that helped the researcher to reviewed what had been written down, and then the researcher started open coding observation transcripts on NVivo. Due to there was no codebook templet for this research, the researcher was creating codes while re-reading data. Bryman (2016) emphasised that code refers to textual word, phrase, or short sentence, thus the researcher did open coding to key textual word and sentences in the file and there were at least two different codes in each day diary. The initial codes for observation data kept in coding category on NVivo and developed open coding in this stage grouped into a category became an axial coding. The axial coding for observation data is as following:

Figure 3.12 Observation data axial coding



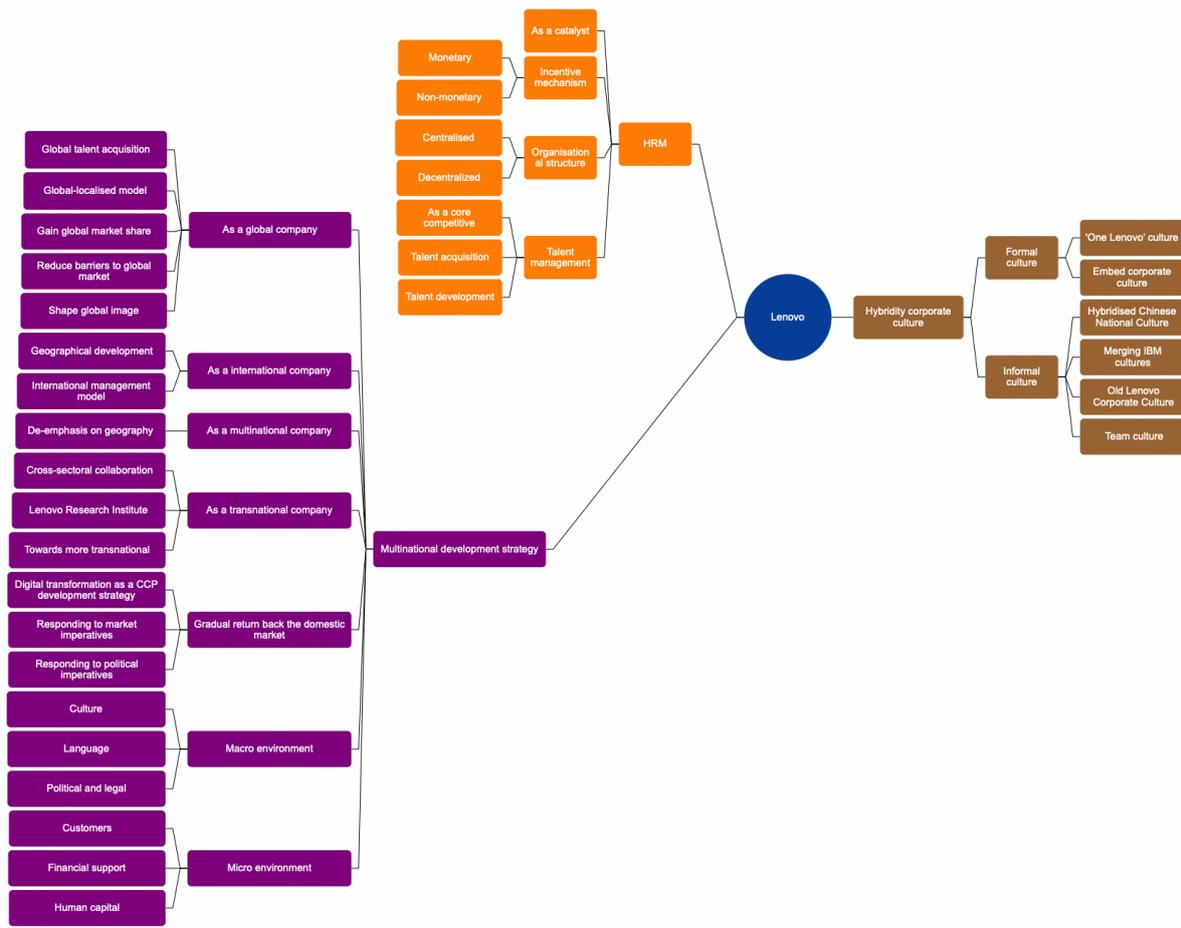
(Developed by the researcher)

An initial thematic map (It will be shown at the end of this section) was created after open coding of interview data and secondary data was completed.

3.4.3 Data analysis of interviews

For the interview data, each piece of audio data (recorded during the interview) was first automatically transcribed into a text file by Just Press Record application. The textual data is then checked against the audio recording, and then input all transcript into NVivo for analysing. In the interview data analysis process, the researcher open coded each of the 11 transcripts where open coding is not affected by coding from the observation data. According to Bryman (2016), the researcher used coloured codes to highlight key words or short sentences by understanding and reflecting of semantic meaning. The next stage was developing axis coding via grouping of the initial open coding. The axial coding for interview data is as following:

Figure 3.13 Interview data axial coding



(Developed by the researcher)

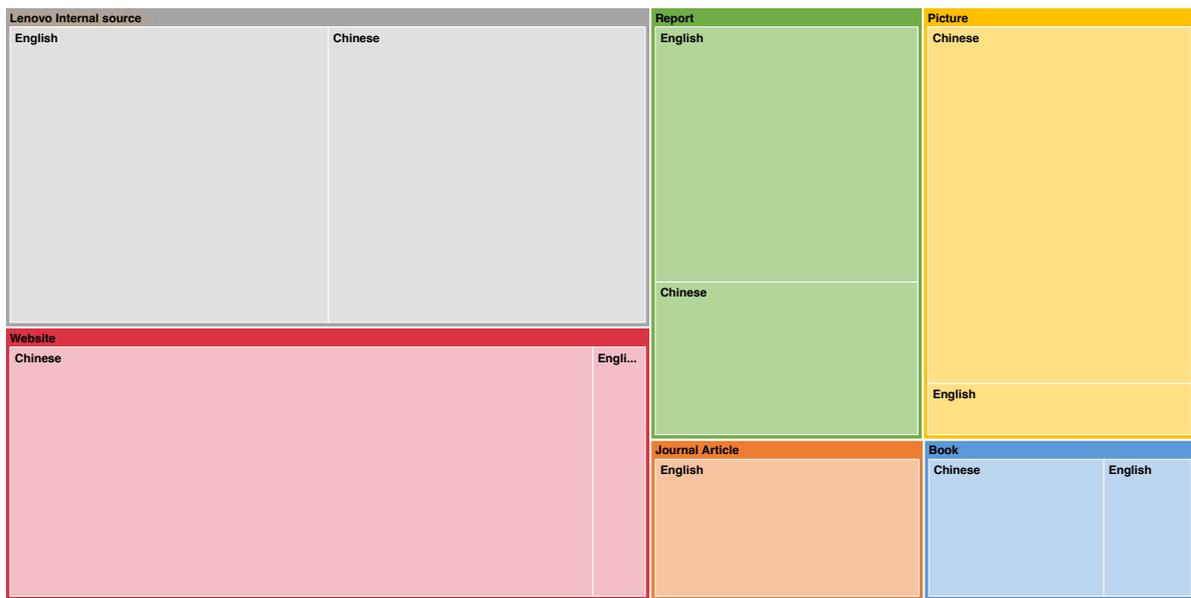
The final stage of data analysis would be selective coding that conducted after secondary data analysed and will be shown by the end of this section.

3.4.4 Data analysis of secondary data

As for the secondary data, there were two types of secondary data in this research which are: secondary data collected during internship and secondary data collected after internship. The main difference between them is the data sources that the collected secondary data after internship generally came from external websites (rather than Lenovo internal ones). Thus, data analysis in this phase was more like a document analysis as a particular method to understand wider meanings in social science research (Krippendorff, 1989). Leverage with secondary data analysis in this research could improve the validity of the study as triangulation of primary and

secondary data analysis can provide multiple data sources for enhancing the reliability of the research (Yin, 1994; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Yin, 2009; Bryman, 2016). Thus, the secondary data that collected after internship will be analysed in this phase, and the data mainly comes from Chinese and English sources, such as websites and books. The summary of secondary data sources in this research are as shown below:

Figure 3.14 Summary of secondary data sources

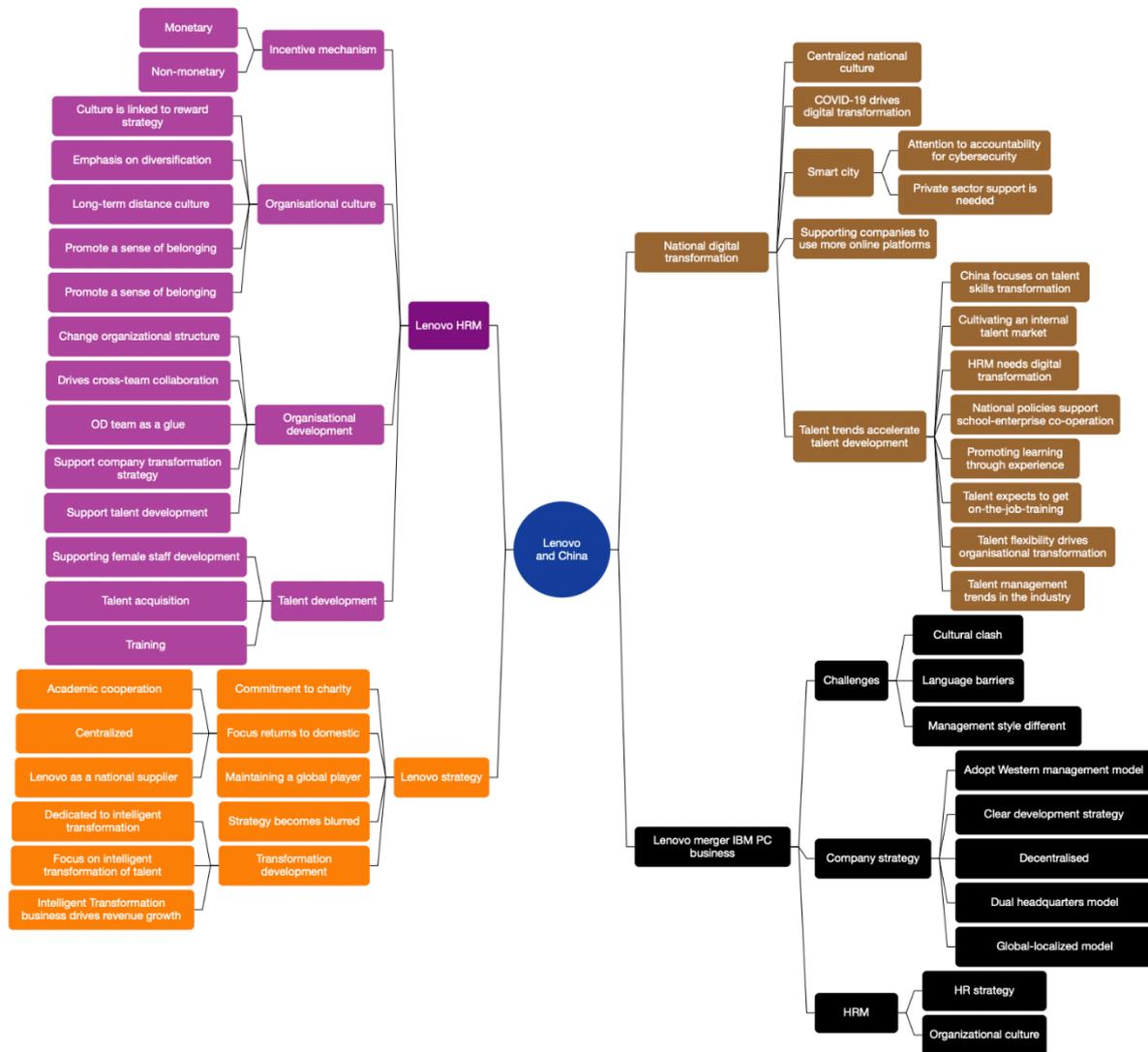


(Developed by the researcher)

For the secondary data analysis process, open coding was first applied to individual data, such as the interpretation of picture data. And then, the open codes were grouped to form axial codes.

The axial coding for the secondary data is as follows:

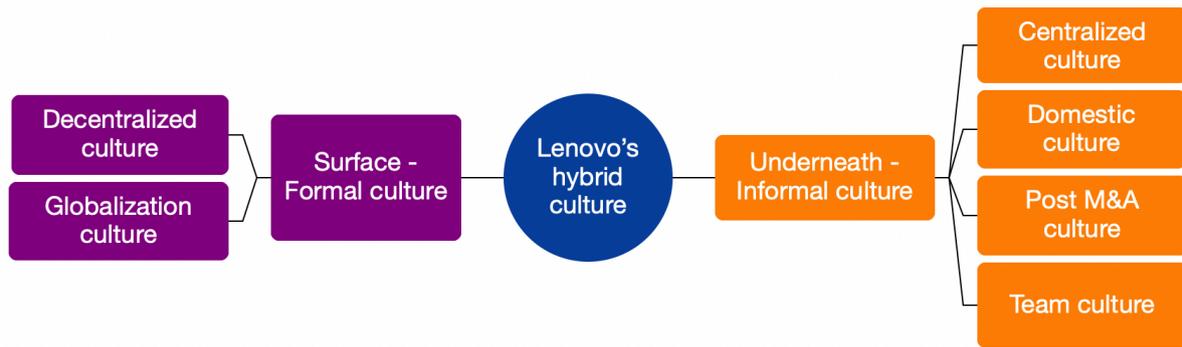
Figure 3.15 Secondary data axial coding:



(Developed by the researcher)

Selective coding is a final stage of coding data where merger similar codes after axial coding (Carson *et al.*, 2001). In this phase, the researcher grouped all selected axial coding together and developed a core category as a thematic map of this research. This also a final stage of induction approach which is develop a theory to explains what has been found. The final thematic map of this research is as following:

Figure 3.16 Thematic map of this research



(Developed by the researcher)

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Williams (2007) argues that research ethical issues include two aspects which are the personal values and personal integrity of the researcher, and the treatment of research subjects regarding informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and other issues. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) agreed and supplement that the key ethical issue also concerns the objectivity of the researcher's behaviour. In this research, the ethical review application was reviewed and had full ethical approval by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham in April 2022. The ethical consideration of this research involved three scenarios which are observation as participant, interview, and desk research. The positionality remains as a PhD student at the University of Birmingham during the research process.

3.5.1 Observation as participant

One of the key potential ethical problems in this research was that of gaining access to Lenovo, in other words, it was about how the researcher might physically enter Lenovo to conduct observation. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) guidance for gaining access, the researcher obtained through Lenovo job postings that the HR Organizational Development team was hiring intern at the time, and then the researcher submitted an application after familiarising with job description and other information of Lenovo. Previous research has

mentioned that utilising existing contacts could help to increase credibility to more likely gain access (Johnson, 1975; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2008; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 2013). Thus, the researcher communicated with the former Lenovo senior global human resource management executive by email through a personal relationship, in which the purpose of the access and the fact that an internship application had been submitted were clearly stated. Perhaps it was a function of email communication with the gatekeeper that the researcher was given the first opportunity to have an online interview with the OD team manager. During the interview process, in addition to being asked about relevant work experience and educational background, the researcher highlighted some of the concerns the company might have, such as the fact that through the internship the researcher would be involved in the day-to-day work and that the anonymity and confidentiality of raw data legally obtained by the individual would be strictly adhered to. In addition, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the research to the OD team manager and pointed out the possible benefits to the team through the researcher's academic experience (not referring to the positive impact of the results of this research on the company but in terms of applying individual academic theoretical knowledge to practice).

After the researcher was granted access (an internship in the Organisational Development team in the Human Resources department at Lenovo's global headquarters), documents such as the company's confidentiality clause were signed on the first day when researcher arrived, and the purpose of the internship and the context of the research were introduced to colleagues who will work together in a workplace, with an emphasis on in advance of any person who did not wish to be written down as an observation should of inform the researcher. During the internship, the data recorded by the researcher was subject to confidentiality and anonymity requirements to protect the subject from being identified. Furthermore, the researcher conducts

comprehensive and accurate data collection to avoid the pitfalls of recording subjective data. Data recorded during the observation period will be saved until the researcher complete the PhD program. Raw data recorded during observations in the researcher's notebook will be retained in a safe place at home, and file that will be manually transcribed in the computer will be stored in a confidential folder. Finally, the positionality of the researcher always remains as a PhD student at the University of Birmingham. Before I started my participant observation, I thought that I had to win the trust of the employees in the workplace by becoming one of them, however as the observation progressed, I realised that this did not affect my positionality as a researcher because the employees were not bothered by the interns. Also, the process of data collection and analysis was not influenced by the internship experience.

3.5.2 Interviews

Building credibility is a key step at the start of the interview data collection process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Colleagues who have worked together through the internship experience already be acknowledge of information about this research, and introducing the research to participants who are potentially interested in participating in the interviews through the network of these gatekeepers/colleagues can add credibility. In addition, considering issues of privacy and confidentiality during interview preparation, the researcher gave the informed consent form to the potential participant via an in-person form, and the interview will be scheduled after they signed informed consent form. The informed consent form for this research included the purpose and basic information about the study, how the data would be processed, respondents' personal safety and privacy concerns, and the researcher would be responsible for the research. As the interview process was still in the later stages of the global pandemic and most participants preferred an online interview format, the researcher used a password access to the online meeting for data security.

During the interview, participants have the right to withdraw and can refuse to answer any questions (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). Also, the researcher must not pressure the participant through words, facial expressions, or body languages (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Before the interviews began, the researcher reiterated the purpose of the research and the ethical considerations to each participant and informed individual that they had the power to withdraw from the research referring to the option to withdraw unconditionally at any time when they felt uncomfortable, and interviews followed the established schedule. During the interviews, the researcher avoided asking leading questions of the interviewees and did not evaluate the participants' responses. Before the end of the interview, the researcher briefly summarised the participant's views to double confirm the data were correctly recorded, and the participant was informed that if individual wished to know how the data had been processed could be followed up by an email.

After interview data collection was complete, the researcher stored the data in encrypted files on a personal computer, with only the researcher having access to the raw data. And to avoid the risk from data loss, the researcher stored the data encrypted in the iCloud. At the stage of analysing the data, the researcher anonymised each respondent to ensure that individuals were not identified. All interview data will be kept until the research complete PhD program.

3.5.3 Desk research

The secondary data research also known as desk research due to the process of data collection and analysis at the desk. Williams (2007) believes that the process of developing secondary data must not ignore the ownership of the original data, thus this research will cite the original source to avoiding allegations of plagiarism. Tripathy (2013) added the view that data should not be kept longer than necessary for that purpose. Therefore, the secondary data of this

research will be stored in encrypted files on the computer and the data will be deleted once PhD programme completed.

3.6 Conclusion

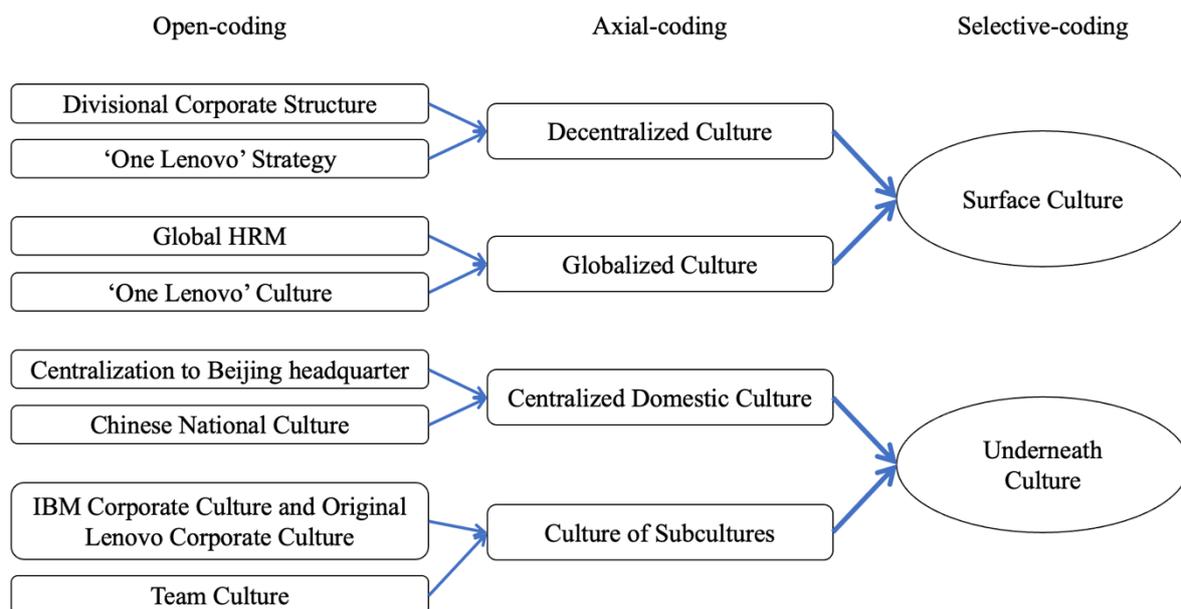
This chapter has illustrated an overview of methodology in this research, it includes four main sections. First section discussed the philosophical assumptions underpinning of this research where interpretivism as the epistemological assumptions of the research can help to gain a deeper understanding of Lenovo's corporate culture. The next section discusses the research approach and justifies the reasons for choosing the inductive approach for this research. And then the research justified why Lenovo was chosen as a single case study and why conducting the qualitative research method in this research. Secondly, it gives the comprehensive research design i.e. triangulation through observation, interviews, and secondary data and how the data is collected. The third section summarises how the data was developed/analysed. The final section concluded the ethical issues associated with this research.

Chapter IV: Findings

4.1 Introduction

this chapter discusses the findings from the primary data of observation as participant at Lenovo and 11 semi-structured interviews. The secondary data sources include 28 Chinese sources and 24 English sources, such as Lenovo internal sources, reports and a book named *The Lenovo Way*. In this research, open, axial and selective coding techniques were used to discuss the nature of Lenovo’s culture, and Figure 4.1 illustrates the coding scheme for the dynamic development process of Lenovo’s hybrid culture.

Figure 4.1 Coding scheme of dynamic hybrid culture



(Developed by the researcher)

This chapter will begin with discussion of descriptive data section before addressing interpretation of thematic map and finally summarise the findings of this research. The first subheading in this chapter reports the descriptive data from participant observation, interview, and secondary data. The entire raw data (from 1 June 2021 to 1 August 2021) was recorded in

a notebook in the form of a daily work diary, and in the first section of the descriptive data will be listed words frequency and briefly interpretive based on words frequency, it therefore to understand the current context at Lenovo headquarters. The data from semi-structured interviews are to help develop an understanding of culture in an organization from an employee perspective. This research is seeking to identify the potential factors that might influence the OC changes. It is worth to enable follow-up questions in the interview as the participants might not all from HR department and important to deep understand their perspectives from different department context. Thus, the words frequency of interview data will be present in the second section and show the briefly interpretation. The third section will discuss the descriptive data from secondary sources such as websites, book, the posts where on Lenovo WeChat Official account and others. The second subheading in this chapter discuss the analytical data after all data analysis process, the interpretive data will include observational data, interview data, and secondary data. This part will be interpreted by thematical map order after selective coding where to analysis the multiple data such as contrasting the different data source, types of words, and phrases participants were using. The extract findings of this research will be present in this section.

A briefly content of sections in findings as the following:

SECTION	CONTENT
4.2 FINDING AND DISCUSSION OF DESCRIPTIVE DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words frequency from participant observation and briefly data interpretation. • Words frequency from interview and briefly data interpretation. • Words frequency from secondary data and briefly data interpretation.

4.3 INTERPRETATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretate thematic map of this research.
OF ANALYTICAL DATA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extract the findings of this research.
4.4 CONCLUSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclude the findings of this research.

4.2 Findings and Discussion of Descriptive Data

4.2.1 Participant observation data

The participant observation data was collected during fieldwork where I was an intern at Organizational Development team (one of HRM functions) at Lenovo headquarters in Beijing. It includes 109 different data (including 30 pieces data on corporate strategy and 79 pieces data on HRM) from 78 days working diaries, the data mainly came from Lenovo headquarters HR department, and some data were present marketing department, Lenovo Research Institute, and business units. The data mainly presented in text, a few of them were in photograph that I took legally in the workplace. In terms of topic, analysis of data shows following, for example, ‘team’ had the highest number of occurrences in the total observation data, with 96 times, followed by ‘development’. Interestingly, in addition to words directly related to the organisation (such as ‘culture’, ‘innovation’, and ‘cooperation’), words such as ‘university’, ‘national’, and ‘China’ appear very frequently. The word ‘gig’ in word frequency reflects the internal project which called ‘Lenovo Gigs’. The words frequency is from participant observation data shown below:

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
team	4	96	1.46%
development	11	86	1.30%
skills	6	79	1.20%
culture	7	71	1.08%
talent	6	59	0.89%
different	9	54	0.82%
department	10	53	0.80%
global	6	53	0.80%
training	8	50	0.76%
leader	6	43	0.65%
develop	7	42	0.64%
gig	3	40	0.61%
university	10	40	0.61%
leadership	10	38	0.58%
management	10	37	0.56%
cooperation	11	31	0.47%
cooperate	9	28	0.42%
china	5	27	0.41%
individual	10	27	0.41%
innovation	10	24	0.36%
intelligent	11	23	0.35%
education	9	22	0.33%
collaboration	13	20	0.30%
connections	11	20	0.30%
performance	11	20	0.30%
transformation	14	20	0.30%
national	8	19	0.29%
communication	13	18	0.27%
experiences	11	18	0.27%
strategic	9	18	0.27%
attitude	8	17	0.26%
reform	6	17	0.26%
artificial	10	16	0.24%
cloud	5	16	0.24%
computing	9	16	0.24%
intelligence	12	16	0.24%

(Developed by the researcher)

From the word frequencies shown, top first words (such as ‘team’, ‘skills’, and ‘culture’) are reflecting classic HR multinational concern in Lenovo. However, this could be general transnational model of HR and highlight one of clusters in Lenovo. At the same time, the words like ‘intelligent’, and ‘innovation’ reflects that company also have digitalization and could be another cluster that more specific agenda which been driven by Chinese government. When I was starting observation as participant, the atmosphere of the company made me realise that intelligent transformation is a key strategic priority for Lenovo, therefore, it brings the first theme question under observation axial coding folder as following.

What is Lenovo's purpose in developing an intelligent transformation?

Due to the call for low-carbon development of globalised industries, Lenovo committed to develop intelligent transformation could of achieve carbon neutrality and building a zero-carbon society.

Extract A, working Diary (on 13th August 2021)

Yuanqing Yang (Lenovo CEO) was introducing digital transformation at internal forum and emphasised: "Climate change is a major challenge facing mankind in the 21st century, we need to actively export our products, services and solutions to help all industries achieve carbon neutrality"

My impression, however, was that Lenovo intelligent transformation development was in line with China's national development strategy, the potential purpose of Lenovo's active participation in the development of digital transformation being potentially to actively support the domestic country's overall development goals. MNEs are facing new pressures from global climate change (Lubinski and Wadhvani, 2020), on the other hand George and Schillebeeckx (2022) believe that government are pushing MNEs to become more localised (nationally focused) in the digital age. Since, the digital transformation of MNEs may accelerate the digital transformation of host countries (Götz, 2020; Fu, Emes and Hou, 2021). President Xi in 2023 noted the need to strengthen the CCP's overall leadership in construction of Digital China (Tan, 2023). As discussed in the Chapter II, the Chinese government supports the global expansion of Chinese MNEs through State advantages (Casanova and Miroux, 2019), and Chen, Wu and Yin (2024) found that digital transformation has a significant impact on the overseas expansion of Chinese MNEs. The following data supports previous studies, such as George and Schillebeeckx (2022) and Casanova and Miroux (2019), found that Lenovo as a CMNE benefits from the digital transformation advantages brought by the Chinese government.

However, this research suggests that Lenovo's digital transformation development is not only in response to global climate change but may also be a sign that the company is increasing its focus to the domestic market.

Lenovo was founded by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Gallagher (2023) noted that the company has a close relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) government. During my internship at Lenovo's headquarters, I did feel that the company was being influenced in some extent by the national government, for example:

Extract B, working Diary (on 19th July 2021)

In the employee community platform, I saw a comment from an anonymous user that wrote: "the biggest shareholder of Lenovo is Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), moreover, a large part of the funding is for scientific research funded by the State. Therefore, Lenovo 'earns' money from the oversea market and supports the development of national scientific research"

This suggests that Lenovo's development is receiving strong backing from the State, for example, the global headquarters has separate building for Lenovo Research where focuses on developing core technologies as a Research and Development (R&D) division of Lenovo. The data indirectly reveals how close Lenovo Research may be to national government:

Extract C, working Diary (on 22nd June 2021)

an employee working at Lenovo Research said: "Lenovo Research Technical Advisory Committee is an important part of Lenovo's external collaboration efforts. They have an Advisory Committee to facilitate in-depth exchanges between Lenovo and Chinese top academics" (Advisory Committee maybe understood as an example of State supportive between university and private sector)

Extract D, working Diary (on 19th July 2021)

In February 2017, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) approved the establishment of the National Engineering Laboratory (NEL), which cooperates with the General Hospital of the People's Liberation Army (301) to address major issues such as medical quality and clinical diagnosis."

This suggests that the company may not only be using Lenovo Research as a core competence to support its business digital transformation, at the same time, Lenovo Research may act as a bridge to enhance technological co-operation with Chinese universities to support the national level intelligent transformation in terms of healthcare facilities for State purposes. Xu, Wang and Liu (2021) claimed that Chinese government R&D subsidies have a positive impact on R&D and innovation in private firms. Naughton (2020) discussed that while the digital transformation is led by the Chinese State government, close collaboration with the private sector, such as Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent. Xiong *et al.* (2021) suggested that China's public-private partnerships exist because projects of State-owned enterprises are more dependent on the experience accumulated by private enterprises over time. The data here finds that Lenovo supports the digital transformation of the healthcare sector by providing business and services to State public hospitals, which consistent with the findings of the previous study mentioned above that Lenovo's intelligent transformation process may has been mutually beneficial by benefiting from government subsidies to enhance its R&D capabilities, at the same time providing innovative technologies to State-owned firms. Overall, this evidence suggests that climate might not be the key driver of Lenovo's digital transformation. The significance of those examples is that Lenovo is perceived as a multinational and transnational company; it is not in general seen as close to the CCP as Huawei. Therefore, this brings the main question which is to what extent can the corporate culture of Lenovo be regarded as transnational, and following axial coding theme question is important in explaining this.

Is Lenovo still a global company?

Previous interpretation discussed that Lenovo is developing like national champion during digital transformation period in China, it shows different side of Lenovo. And then it raises a question here that can Lenovo remaining a global player as a national champion? The observation in Lenovo headquarters suggests the image of Lenovo being a global enterprise is a debate, and this is life issue where how people perceive it, for example:

Extract E, working Diary (on 19th July 2021)

An anonymous user left a comment on employee community platform firmly believes that “Lenovo is a global company” (written in Chinese without further comment)

Extract F, working Diary (on 3rd August 2021)

While chatting with colleagues during the lunch time, a colleague complained “Lenovo’s mission became increasingly ambiguous. Lenovo’s mission was always to be the first in The PC industry (this is a slogan at that time ‘being No1 in PC industry’) when I just joined the company. From 2013 to 2016, Lenovo’s mission continued and developed into PC Plus. However, after 2016, Lenovo gradually had no clear development mission” Another colleague joined the discussion on this topic and added “especially...after Lenovo cancelled its North Carolina headquarters in 2019”, so I asked why company cancelled its headquarters in Raleigh, and was told “due to the fact that Lenovo was being pressured by public opinion (social media) in China at the time, and was being referred to as a ‘foreign company’”

Extract G, working Diary (on 27th July 2021)

“Zone to Win” management model has won the Ram Charan Management Practice Award in 2022 “Lenovo adopted the Zone to Win enterprise management model in

2018 with the aim of addressing diversified business development. The model consists of four areas: the Performance area (mature global businesses); the Platform area (supporting the organisation's systems operations); the Incubation area (exploring next-generation business opportunities); and the Transformation area (apply business opportunities in more suitable oversea market)''

Lenovo's development as a global player after its global transformation is undeniable, but it seems that the pace of global development has become blurred in recent years. Recent studies suggested that Lenovo's image and proposition reflect the completion of an evolution from local to global identity (Boiano, 2020; Rashidin *et al.*, 2020; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023). The extract E may look uncontroversial on surface, the statement from extract F implies there is a live issue between globalisation and national where others do not agree Lenovo is following globalisation direction, and extract G reflects that Lenovo has an enthusiasm about globalisation as they were celebrating won the award when I was there. These extracts find Lenovo still remain global player in many aspects, but ambiguous, and it brings employee concerns. Thus, this research argues that by cancelling Lenovo headquarters in Raleigh seems to suggest that the company is likely to evolve in de-globalisation by putting the focus back on China. While 'Zone to Win' model potentially support digital transformation development as the incubation area business usually starts from Lenovo Research, which hints a centralisation of power back to Lenovo centred on the Lenovo Research Institute. The increasing focus on domestic market may has introduce dynamic of centralisation and deglobalisation, which may conflict early trends towards of decentralised and globalisation.

This ambiguity is not only a trend for Lenovo, for example Zámorský *et al.* (2023) suggest that globalisation and de-globalisation are not two separate processes, and that many Chinese MNEs experience a process of mutual transformation of globalisation and de-globalisation

under geopolitical pressure in China. However, there is a time lag, by 2021 the literature seems to refer to an earlier time when Lenovo embraced the globalisation, there is evidence through observation that the true situation within Lenovo's Beijing headquarters has deglobalized in practice. We mentioned deglobalisation in Lenovo, and now we move to centralisation, for example:

Extract H, working Diary (on 16th June 2021)

At lunchtime, a departmental colleague was discussing the new project that was about to be launched "One employee said that although he/she would be interested in other department projects and would like to join them, but afraid of the line manager's attitude (would be perceived as not having enough work to do), so he would not choose to join other departmental projects" Another colleague agreed and said that "Lenovo has strong top-down leadership, and things can be done only with the support of the senior management" One of the colleagues added that "Lenovo's functional and business units are too independent leading to a very centralised approach in each department"

Extract I, working Diary (on 2nd August 2021)

A colleague complains at work that "I have communicated with colleagues in other departments by email for many times, and they tend to ignore my emails which is very inefficient and rude, however, when I copy to my line manager in the same email, I get response very rapidly" Other colleagues also felt that "they were often ignored in cross-departmental communication because their work title would be shown in emails usually" I had the same feeling during my internship "Once my project manager asked me to confirm something with another colleague in the

department, and I observed that the colleague had already read my email, but deliberately replied to it the next afternoon”

The extract H suggests that centralisation as a culture in Lenovo and employee see the management is centralisation in terms of bureaucracy as style of line manager being centralised at each level. In other words, the centralisation of Lenovo may reflect in practice as “bureaucratic” and “power-orientation”, and this hierarchical approach may result in hindering cross-departmental cooperation between departments. This is not surprising that Lenovo has centralised management as Shenkar (2009) found that Chinese senior executives have a centralising style, and Gorshkov and Podoba (2023) indicate that MNEs from East Asia (China, South Korea and Japan) usually have a centralised corporate structure. However, it is bit odd here that people in Lenovo headquarters behave globally while the management approach is less global. Despite Lenovo’s present its globalised identity to public, the centralised way of working and atmosphere is still very much evident in practice. Therefore, this research argues that Lenovo has the outward appearance of a globalised identity, but as a CMNE it is still centralised in nature.

The above extracts show concerns about Lenovo is seen as decentralised because it follows the similar management style as other CMNEs. This in line with the live issue in the previous extracts (extract E, F, and G) that whether Lenovo is still on the globalisation track today, the extract H and I are clues and suggests the company becoming more centralised in recent years. This research found that being global not only just performance in management, but also a tendency to symbolise as the global culture, for example, the *Lenovo Way* is a book that was celebrating their global culture, however, now the company has (literally) ‘burying’ it:

Extract G, working Diary (on 3rd July 2021)

The Lenovo Way, co-authored by Lenovo's Senior Vice President of Global Human Resources (Gina Qiao) and Chief Diversity Officer (Yolanda Conyers) in 2014, reflects the development of Lenovo's global culture. During my internship, when I went to the warehouse to collect training materials, I saw many boxes of brand-new copies of this book stacked up in the warehouse. I had never seen a copy of this book before I had the chance to access the warehouse, except one case that there was one copy under one of employee's laptop and was told not allow to take it out of the office.

IBM had published *The IBM Way* by Rodgers and Shook (1987), and the name of the book reveals that *The Lenovo Way* attempts to emulate IBM's book, and from the content of the book *The Lenovo Way* clearly emphasise its global culture by "integrating" IBM's cultural management. The meanings of this are: *The Lenovo Way* is celebrating how IBM has global culture, and how Lenovo gained global culture so quickly. Boiano (2020) found that Lenovo had created a global culture ten years after acquiring IBM PC business by reflecting on the context of *The Lenovo Way*. Contrary to this view, the book was buried in a warehouse suggests that Lenovo management's objective was no longer to pursue globalisation, this would confirm the previous employee concerns that the nature of being global company has become ambiguous. Lenovo may be distancing from globalisation rather than breaking with global culture entirely, as the book is not now being destroyed entirely but stored separately in a warehouse may hint at the gradual concealment of an attitude that once embraced global culture. This book has been referred to numerous studies as an example of globalisation (Stahl and Lengyel, 2013; Liu and Liang, 2017), however, this research suggests that Lenovo does not deny its former global culture integrated with Western culture in its early years but chooses to hide it in practice. My finding here has combined with previous employee concerns and identified that Lenovo consciously moving away from globalised culture. The observation data

has discussed that management and symbolic in Lenovo are important and have been changing, now I would like to move to more specific discussion on HR department at Lenovo headquarters and seeking how these changes affect HR functions.

Which of the global HR departments receives the most attention?

As be expected, Lenovo's HR department is divided into functional teams based on the nature of their work, including HR service centre, HR business partner, and Organization and Talent Management (OTM) team. In the first few days of the observation, I thought the recruitment team received the most attention as had the largest number of employees and they appeared to be busier, as follows:

Extract K, working Diary (on 5th August 2021)

The recruitment team has been preparing for the Global Future Leaders programme (referring to recruit a group of employees with great potential for future senior management) activities, as described by one of the colleagues "After joining Lenovo through this programme I worked in the marketing department, I worked in different departments for 6 months until I found the best fit for me in the culture team"

This extract shows Lenovo adapts the global approach to recruitment and recruit potential talent to certain role could maintain globalisation track. While the recruitment team may seem to play an important role in screening the right talent for the company (Abdalla Hamza *et al.*, 2021), but as I learnt more about my work content, I came to believe that the organisational development team played a more important role, as follows:

Extract L, working Diary (on 3rd June 2021)

The project in the organisational development team is in support of Lenovo's organisational restructuring "to coordinate cross-functional departments through

moving from a job-centred to a skills-centred approach, thereby driving the organisation to become more agile”, improve the collaboration “To promote collaboration, individual improvement and skill exchange across the Lenovo”, and support organizational culture “The objective is to support ‘One Lenovo’ culture and be a driver of 3S transformation company strategy”

Previous discussion shows the tense in centralised direction at Lenovo; however, extract L shows now the culture leads to decentralised and organizational development team is supporting decentralisation. It is highlighting the importance of organizational development team role in Lenovo, for example, the practice of organisational development practices is often reflected in organisational change in order to support the corporate culture of leadership (Chowdhury, 2019; Burke, 2022). Organisational development focuses more on bringing together the will of the employees and the organisation (Hardacre and Peck, 2017). This research finding is in line with those literatures and argues that Lenovo’s organisational development team as a glue throughout the company not only the corporate culture plays a vital role more importantly supporting the company’s strategic development and coordinating departmental cooperation. However, when collating the data at the end of the fieldwork, researcher realised that the corporate culture team may be actually the most central of the entire functional teams. While the role of the corporate culture team does not receive the immediate results as the other functional teams, the purposeful creation of a corporate culture atmosphere invariably has an embedded impact on employees. Before moving to Lenovo’s culture team, there are three options that understand Lenovo carry out globally culture: 1) global culture may be fake and it is a delusion that never exist 2) it is a layer culture where parallel existence of global and national cultures 3) it is a hedge between two waves of collaboration and centralisation. Either option does not affect Lenovo performance its global culture, for example:

Extract M, working Diary (on 4th June 2021)

The culture team organised more than 4 cultural activities during the three months of observation, including: a mascot design competition, collection of cultural stories, a mobile phone puzzle game, Big Bang Forum, and Innovation Series”

Extract N, working Diary (on 28^h July 2021)

“Employees around the world actively participated in the mascot design competition, including colleagues from Japan and the U.S., who reflected in the design through their understanding of the ‘One Lenovo’ culture”

Extract O, working Diary (on 3rd August 2021)

Creating an employee-friendly work environment “In the lobby of Lenovo’s Beijing headquarters building, there is a climbing wall where an employee is climbing with the child, perhaps reflecting Lenovo’s ‘One Lenovo’ corporate culture”

The above extracts show that Lenovo’s culture is global and collaborative. These cultural activities achieved the purpose of publicity on one hand, and deepened employees’ understanding of the concept on the other hand. Take an example of Lenovo mascot design, this could reflect that essentially the corporate culture is embedded in the consciousness of the employees, otherwise it may not be possible for the employees to design a mascot image that is highly relevant to the concept of corporate culture from their own imagination. Most of the studies believed that corporate culture positively affects employee performance (Fidyah and Setiawati, 2020; Nguyen, Yandi and Mahaputra, 2020; Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). It is worth noting that two years away from design the company mascot, the researcher did not find Lenovo had used the mascot that had been chosen, which perhaps confirms the live issue in extract F that the mascot design activity was merely symbolic to present Lenovo’s global culture, and not to use it is a clue to show the company may not that global. Although this

research was not able to directly examine the relationship between Lenovo's corporate culture and employee performance, the research argues that rooting corporate culture in employees' consciousness to influence their behaviour (centralised management) is the first step in influencing employee performance by gradually deepening employees' understanding of the culture through phased corporate culture activities.

This research suggests that there may not be a specific team that is the most important across the HR function. The recruitment team helps the company to select more suitable employees (Abdalla Hamza *et al.*, 2021); the organisational development department coordinates the development of the entire company (Burke, 2022); and the training team assists employees in their professional development. Although the task of the culture team is based on the promotion of corporate culture, it is undeniable that successful promotion of corporate culture has a meaningful impact on the behaviour of employees.

In summary, the participant observation data suggests that Lenovo is centralised, bureaucratic and independent of departments in practice and moving away from globalisation. Although Lenovo is a global company in China, the observation data show that there are global and national directions running in parallel in the company. With the digital transformation phase of Lenovo gradually centralising its R&D capabilities back in its Beijing headquarters due to the State subsidies it receives, and the company performance in more national way. Thus, the research argues that Lenovo has not yet fully become a global company in practice. For the explanation of Lenovo corporate culture, the research suggests that corporate culture activities try to influence employee awareness, but there is not enough evidence to directly prove how corporate culture influences employee behaviour. Overall, the conclusion from the observation data is there is a debate between globalisation and nationalization in Lenovo, a few questions

arise here: whether the direction of globalisation and nationalisation has led Lenovo to develop a hybrid culture; is this hybridity a complete mix or is it half and half or are they in conflict with each other?

4.2.2 Interviews data

11 participants were interviewed, and they are all working at Lenovo headquarters in Beijing but different department, as bellowing:

Table: Participants in interview

Business Unit	Male	Female
Infrastructure Solution Group	2	1
Global Human Resource	1	1
Solution and Services Group	1	1
Intelligent Devices Group	0	2
Marketing	0	1
Lenovo Research Technical Advisory Committee	1	0

Raw data was collected in audio recordings and transcribed into text files to be analysed in Nvivo, for example, open coding the participants thoughts and their feelings. Eventually, there were 444 codes, including: 147 codes of Lenovo HRM data, 120 codes of Lenovo hybridity corporate culture data, and 117 codes of Lenovo multinational development strategy data. Interestingly, although there was more female participant data than male participant data, the most codes were from male interviews, it may be because males were more likely to contribute “knowledge” than just talking. Also, *Participant i7* (senior role related with culture in HR department) was coded the most, with a total of 56 codes, followed by *Participant 1* (male in Infrastructure Solution Group) who was coded 55 times. After all interviews data were analysed, it is clearly to see that ‘culture’ had the highest number of occurrences with 322 times,

and it could be a good sign to the research as culture is a root of this research. The word ‘boss’ (*laoban* in Chinese) also appeared a relatively high number of times, which may be related to the Chinese context, where ‘boss’ represents either line manager or head of department. Apart from that, words such as ‘national’ and ‘government’ appear very frequently, it could be a sign to lead this research gives more interpretation on how those words involve in Lenovo culture.

The words frequency from interview data is shown below:

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
culture	7	322	2.35%
training	8	139	1.01%
development	11	118	0.86%
team	4	101	0.74%
different	9	88	0.64%
china	5	87	0.63%
transformation	14	82	0.60%
corporate	9	75	0.55%
boss	4	70	0.51%
department	10	70	0.51%
cultural	8	69	0.50%
technology	10	69	0.50%
intelligent	11	68	0.50%
recognition	11	63	0.46%
talent	6	62	0.45%
ibm	3	57	0.42%
chip	4	54	0.39%
feel	4	53	0.39%
behaviour	9	52	0.38%
values	6	52	0.38%
understand	10	50	0.36%
management	10	49	0.36%
government	10	47	0.34%
national	8	47	0.34%
communication	13	45	0.33%
customer	8	44	0.32%
industry	8	44	0.32%
international	13	43	0.31%
local	5	43	0.31%
skills	6	42	0.31%
university	10	39	0.28%
learning	8	38	0.28%
strategy	8	38	0.28%
overseas	8	37	0.27%
change	6	36	0.26%

(Developed by the researcher)

From the word frequency, it seems not only ‘culture’ at the top one but also it become more powerful when ‘cultural’ combine with ‘culture’. Although ‘culture’ appears more often, the interpretation of cultural understanding remains ambiguous on table. It is noteworthy that although nearly 20 years have passed since Lenovo acquired IBM’s PC business, the word

‘IBM’ appears more frequently in the word frequency, which may reflect that IBM’s legacy may still exist in the work scenarios of employees at this stage. Combined with axial coding of interview data, more data was interpreted as follows:

What is the role of HRM in Lenovo?

It is argued the role of HR in M&A in the previous literature that it is a strategic partner, employee champion, and change agent (Antila, 2006). While Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow (2010) summarised the role of HR function in MNEs as champion of process, guardian of culture, and manager of internal receptivity. Malik, Froese and Sharma (2020) identified the role of HRM is to improve training and recruitment capacity. This research finds the role of HRM in Lenovo is facilitating to make company look like decentralised with less directive, it could be described as a catalyst to create long-term value, for example:

“I believe that the role of our HRM is a catalyst. The recruitment team acts as a catalyst by attracting talent to the company through the right channels to support or accelerate business development; the motivation team acts as a catalyst by developing business-related incentive programmes and targeting changes in employee behaviour” (Participant 7)

More than half of the respondents believe that Lenovo regards talent as a core competency, and three participants believe that purely technical talents are the future of Lenovo, however, two participants think the company values talent who speak different languages. This research argues that in the era of intelligent transformation, digital talent scarcity is becoming more and more obvious, therefore Lenovo’s demand for digital talent can be significant. As companies need to find and hold more suitable talent who has IT-related knowledge and skills for new business it is becoming more important to recruit digital talent (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Gilch and Sieweke, 2021). Guerra, Danvila-del-Valle and Méndez-Suárez (2023) argue that digital

developments are changing the way organisations attract new employees and retain them. Lenovo's change towards this can also be reflected in the perspective of talent acquisition channels:

“it's more important to promote the internal employee referral as internal employee understand our culture as well as the requirements of the role...they might know someone who fit into certain role” (Participant 7)

“I joined Lenovo through an organisation that provides career planning for international students.” (Participant 4)

From participant 7 extract, this seems imply Lenovo's recruitment shifting away from global labour market as company tends to remain current employees. However, from participant 2 extract, HRM is maximising its sights on overseas students and experienced practitioners, as returning students have an overseas academic background and critical thinking ability, while experienced practitioners may contribute more to practice. This is in keeping with the findings of previous study (Bai, 2022), which Chinese MNEs generally recruit internationally through campus recruiting and social recruiting through internal referrals.

On the other hand, in the participant observation data it is explained how Lenovo Research is working with Chinese higher education institutions, while the occurrence of 'university' in the interview data word frequency implies that there may exist a link between Lenovo's HRM and Chinese higher institutions. This seems appear a movement direction where Lenovo may collaborate more with home country universities, for example:

“We have strategic partnerships with universities that match our requirements for talent need especially technically skilled talent. For example, we do talent development programme with Tsinghua University and Shanghai Jiao Tong

University, also we sponsor competitions such as technology competitions and innovation competitions. In addition to this, we also integrate technology curriculum into university teaching through practical curriculum, so students can experience something more practical than just theoretical knowledge” (Participant 7)

From a talent acquisition perspective, this reflects Lenovo’s HRM priority to attract potential talent from higher education institutions and enhance the talent pool, especially during the period of digital transformation. Corsi, Fu and Külzer-Sacilotto (2021) found that organizations see universities as collaborators as they can provide cutting-edge knowledge for R&D. This research argues that Lenovo is on the one hand attracting potential digital talent to join the company in the future through sponsoring knowledge competitions in higher education institutions, on the other hand is seeking access to high-end technologies.

Whether or not this represents an HR strategy that favours ‘buying’ talent rather ‘building’ talent it requires a prior understanding of its 70%-20%-10% principle as talent training approach. There were 4 participants agree that 70% training relies on day-to-day work as the easiest way to progress; 2 participants think 20% training relies on leaning from colleagues as the most effective; 4 participants believe that 10% training relied on available sources provided by company as the most professional. Earlier studies have discussed that most employees are achieved “training” through work experience (McCall, Lombardo and Morrison, 1988; Noe *et al.*, 1997). Also, Wick (1989) believes that “70 percent of all learning comes from informal on-the-job work experience” (Cited in Prince, 2005). However, Wiradendi Wolor *et al.* (2020) recently found that the e-training is more likely to have a positive impact on employee performance after global epidemic. To the extent (Wiradendi Wolor *et al.*, 2020) research, this research argues that Lenovo’s 70%-20%-10% training principles provide multiple learning

channels for personal development, it seems employees are more likely to achieve their career development goals both formally (accessing online training courses) and informally (learning from work experience).

In summary, HRM plays the role as a catalyst to support talent management in Lenovo in terms of attracting and developing talent. On the one hand, attracting more potential talents through strategic cooperation with Chinese universities, on the other hand, retaining more existing talents by strengthening internal training and transferring. The above discussion potentially explains Lenovo's need for digital talent in the intelligent transformation phase and strengthen talent pool by "buying" and "building" talent.

Is Lenovo a hybrid corporate culture?

After analysing the interview axial coding data regarding corporate culture, it was found that there is a hybrid corporate culture in Lenovo, and it consists of two cultures: formal culture and informal culture (or hidden culture). Interestingly there were 38 coded data under the formal culture category, however there were 83 coded data under the informal culture theme, thus this research argues that informal culture may be more expressed performance in Lenovo.

"One Lenovo" culture as a formal corporate culture was confirmed by all respondents, this research suggests that the formal culture of Lenovo to be dominated by "One Lenovo" culture. In the participant observation data, researcher found that the company organised a variety of cultural events, while in the interview data 5 participants highlighted that these cultural events were aimed at creating an awareness of the new corporate culture. Akpa, Asikhia and Nneji (2021) see corporate culture as a "form of control" that influences employees' decisions and behaviour, based on this point, here was an unanswered question in the description of the observational data, how does the corporate culture (or culture events) influence employee

behaviour. From interview data, 6 participants indicated that the core corporate culture of “One Lenovo” had an impact on their working styles and patterns through their use of firm words such as “does”, “can” and “indeed”, and that they unconsciously performance the values of the corporate culture, such as inclusiveness and a customer-first attitude in their daily work. Recent research has found that corporate culture creates an ideal organisational climate by regulating what employees can and cannot do (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Graham *et al.*, 2022; Nabella *et al.*, 2022). However, this research argues that Lenovo’s corporate culture is not a set of norms to regulate employee behaviour, but rather an embedded sense of values (or awareness) influences employee behaviour. The data shows different here may be due to differences in the country contexts and cases studied. Here, the researcher believes this is where Lenovo’s hybrid culture began, as ‘One Lenovo’ culture is a result after integrated IBM’s culture and eventually be a surface culture in the company. It is may not fully contradiction between surface and underneath culture but represent different cultures parallel developments.

Informal culture in Lenovo was described by 5 participants, who believed that informal culture is reflected in the strong power distance in practice, referring that the frontline employees themselves do not have much decision-making power. However, one of the participants explained that this could be related to Chinese culture. Cui *et al.* (2016) believed that Lenovo has a strong paternalistic culture representing the result of traditional Chinese corporate culture being influenced by the national culture (This view was about pre-merger Lenovo when the company has paternalistic culture like other CMNEs before M&A). This research argues that the Chinese national culture of high-power distance might be embedded in Lenovo’s corporate culture deepening the paternalistic mindset leadership and thus forms part of hidden culture. However, Babu, Li and Hou (2020) found that Lenovo received relatively less from Chinese national cultural influences than other Chinese MNEs such as Huawei. The data shows

different with (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020) may be because the participants were all from Lenovo's global headquarters in Beijing, it may not be fully representative of its global context. This seems imply Lenovo is moving towards global culture, however, it has some routes like reversing which it is not completely different from global culture, but hybrid that nature of mixture has been changed. As Cui *et al.* (2016) described stage of cultural integration in terms of M&A, what they did not study was culture different between Lenovo China and Lenovo International, this research found that the success of M&A cultural integration brought the global cultural side to Lenovo, and the national cultural side was gradually displayed after Lenovo towards nearly 20 years.

Another informal culture that exists at Lenovo, according to this research, is the legacy of IBM's corporate culture. Three participants agreed that it was easy to recognise which of the acquired IBM employees were at work because they had characteristics that represented IBM, for example, a participant worked in a department that was merged with the IBM PC business at the time:

“(acquired IBM) employees retain the same way as they did before such as the formatting of emails, the way how they are working present IBM culture sometimes”
(Participant 10)

Recent studies found that most M&A failures are due to potential culture clashes, as it is difficult to change the corporate culture once it is formed, thus enterprises tend to acquire companies with low corporate culture differences (Doukas and Zhang, 2021; Gorton, Grennan and Zentefis, 2022; Graham *et al.*, 2022). Lupina-Wegener *et al.* (2020) believe that retaining the cultural traits of the acquired (West) company will increase employees' identification with new Chinese managers. This confirms Cui *et al.* (2016) research that Lenovo was successful

because retained IBM culture, however, the data was collected in 2012 in their study and by that time Lenovo employees did not say the different between before and after. This research suggests that Lenovo may have gone through a process of corporate culture integration to minimise the risk of cultural differences in order to successfully acquire IBM's PC business, however, considering the time dimension, it argues that the gradual "hiding" of the acquired company's culture has resulted in the legacy of IBM's corporate culture possibly becoming another hidden culture within Lenovo (this will only be reflected in employees who have worked for IBM).

Similarly, older Lenovo employees (i.e. those who joined company before the cross-border M&A) might perform the former Lenovo corporate culture as part of a continuing informal culture. Three of the participants agreed that the old Lenovo employees had work attitudes that demonstrated the corporate culture that Lenovo had had in the past, for example:

"old Lenovo's culture was emphasising the ability to execute and being down-to-earth, you can see this from employees who working at Lenovo for a long time"

(Participant 7)

One participant added that this could be because Lenovo was mainly developing in China at the time when required employees to be down-to-earth and hard-working. Although Lenovo introduced the Western management model and culture by hiring Western managers during the whole culture integration with IBM PC division, kept the original corporate culture management mechanism (Cui *et al.*, 2016). This study extends the (Cui *et al.*, 2016) research that the essence of the old Lenovo corporate culture has not completely disappeared in the nearly 20 years since Lenovo acquired IBM PC business , and in practice old Lenovo

employees may still perform according to their previous corporate culture in their day-to-day work, which may also be part of Lenovo's hidden culture.

Unlike the above invisible culture from M&A, unexpectedly, the team culture as a hidden culture formed within Lenovo's informal culture. The team culture here refers to how each individual team has a team culture - the question being where does the team culture come from - although China is a collectivist culture, team culture does not look 'Chinese'. This research assumes the team culture in Lenovo is a product of M&A. It argues that culture is pluralistic as employees do not see team culture is problem, and some teams are more centralised, and some are more western style. In practice, it allows individual team set team characteristic, this is kind of hybrid adaptation or hybrid flexibility.

The shaping of team culture is a topic of debate within Lenovo. There were 5 participants who described how the presence of team culture highlighted the characteristics of each department's work content and existed as a subculture in Lenovo. One participant explained the team culture as:

"(team culture) is a symbol of the department" (Participant 7)

Yet another participant disagreed with Participant 7, arguing that:

"team manager determines the overall team culture" (Participant 10)

Calabuig, Olcina and Panebianco (2018) believe that differences in team competencies reflect individualistic and collectivistic team cultures. Recent research found that team culture is a dynamic culture that develops over time through team learning behaviours (Pineiro *et al.*, 2022), on the other hand, it argues that the emotional intelligence competencies that team leaders possess affect the performance of the team culture (Jamshed and Majeed, 2023). Since

the 5 participants were from different teams of Lenovo, this research suggests that differences based on the nature of the team's work may lead to differences in the shaping of team culture. In other words, Lenovo team culture could be shaped by employees learning from each other over time to gradually develop a particular team atmosphere, team culture also could be shaped by team leaders. 2 participants believed that team culture promotes co-operation and knowledge sharing among colleagues, it expands Işık *et al.* (2021) research that tacit knowledge sharing promotes team culture, this research suggests that in turn team culture could strengthen knowledges sharing within the team. This research is similar to that found in (Mishra and Kasim, 2023) who found that team culture seen as a subculture of the wider organisational culture, the team culture at Lenovo does not conflict with the core corporate culture, instead unique team culture as a horizontal informality culture is a way of better presenting the corporate culture based on the traits of the team's work.

In summary, hybrid culture seems to be present at Lenovo consisting of formal and informal cultures. Although the 'One Lenovo' culture is visible in the company as a formal culture, there are still hidden cultures that are not visible, such as domestic national culture, IBM culture (includes team culture), and previous Lenovo culture. These informal cultures may not potentially influence the formal culture but in practice they may have an impact on shaping employee behaviour and work atmosphere. Individual team has different culture shows Lenovo is pluralistic that may have centralised and decentralised culture in different team. Although the centralisation and decentralisation are opposite, it seems not a problem at Lenovo as they could have both side and parallel developments.

Is Lenovo moving towards more centralisation?

The bureaucratic and power orientated tendencies of Lenovo in practice as discussed in the participant observation data are in line with (Gorshkov and Podoba, 2023) study which argues

that Chinese MNEs have a centralised structure, which may implies that the Lenovo tends to be “de-globalised” development as a global company. A similar finding might be drawn from the interview data that 4 participants felt the “One Lenovo” core corporate strategy essentially emphasised the centralised position of the Beijing headquarters. However, one participant believed that the global pandemic had made the centralised side more visible in practice. This research argues that Lenovo as a global company may still having a power centralised side, referring to vertical centralisation towards the Beijing headquarters. Recent study has suggested that for manufacturing multinationals headquarters maintain a more tightly centralised decision-making authority (Lee, 2022). Inconsistent with this view, this research argues that that Lenovo as a Chinese multinational technology company also present a tendency to centralise power in its headquarters in the post epidemic era, it is similar to (Srivastava and Mir, 2023) research found that in the post epidemic era multinationals need to consider centralising headquarters rather than decentralised control systems.

In addition, 10 participants believed that Lenovo’s digital transformation may be seen as a sign of focusing on domestic market development in order to respond to the national call for intelligent transformation, and therefore market needs may have strengthened the centralised side of Lenovo, for example:

“I think that Lenovo reflects the character of a national digital transformation development” (Participant 1)

“Lenovo’s role is based on national policy and combined with its own strengths to do the implementation work” (Participant 2)

“by cooperating with (local government) respond to national strategies implementation (digital transformational strategy)” (Participant 7)

“I feel that the purpose of this (Lenovo prioritises digital transformation) is to keep in line with the national strategy or industry trends” (Participant 8)

Liu and Li (2022) claimed that MNE headquarters and home country-specific advantages interaction can increase firm technological innovation thus generating a top-down model. Consistent with this view, 3 participants in interviews argued that China’s national strategy of intelligent transformation creates business demand for the company’s smart devices such as servers and computers.

“there are still many opportunities for Lenovo, whether from government, healthcare or city water systems” (Participant 3)

Furthermore, 7 participants believed that digital transformation facilitated opportunities for companies to collaborate with local governments, for example:

“The State Grid of China is an external customer of Lenovo” (Participant 9)

Therefore, this research extends (Liu and Li, 2022) view that Lenovo’s digital transformation may benefit from new market created by the specific advantages of its home country, at the same time, the implementation of the national digital transformation strategy needs to be supported by private technology companies like Lenovo, the fact that Lenovo is returning R&D focus back to the domestic market may reflect the possible centralisation of its power structure towards its Beijing headquarters.

In summary, from the interview data, Lenovo may have implicitly centralised power back to its Beijing headquarters, which is reflected in practice in the development of informal culture and digital transformation strategies. From a cultural perspective, national culture as an invisible culture indirectly reflects its Beijing culture gradually growing and shaping Lenovo’s

globalised identity into nationalisation. Furthermore, from the perspective of the company's digital transformation strategy, the domestic market advantage created by home country-specific advantages may influence Lenovo to put its core R&D projects back to the domestic market, resulting in the centralisation of power to the Beijing headquarters. On the other hand, the culture of global headquarter has strong influence from US side, for example, team seems have different culture and it is pluralistic. More surprising, global headquarter in Beijing has strong influence from US, the formal culture is still post-M&A culture, the informal culture sees toward move to centralisation.

4.2.3 Secondary data

As this research uses triangulated data analysis methods, secondary data can help provide validity to the findings. For secondary data, a total of 48 data sources were included that 30 of these data sources were in Chinese and 18 data sources were from English data. Specifically, 14 data sources were from Lenovo public documents; 12 data sources were from websites; 8 data sources were from reports (business report from third party and company report); 8 data sources were in picture; 3 data sources were from journal articles; and 3 data sources were from books. Different types of secondary data can help this research to reduce data bias, and the objectivity of the data related to Lenovo is also improved through secondary sources. After open coding and axial coding of the secondary data, the cumulative number of codes was 223 nodes, which contained: 75 Lenovo merger IBM codes, 61 National digital transformation codes, 53 Lenovo HRM nodes, and 34 Lenovo strategy codes. In a preliminary word frequency analysis of the secondary data, the word 'culture' was found to be the most frequent with 162 times. The second most frequent word is 'China', which may be because the research perspective was conducted in the context of Lenovo in China. Also, the word 'IBM' appeared 70 times in the secondary data, this may be caused by the fact that one of the books mainly shows how the corporate culture was integrated during the stage of Lenovo's acquisition of

IBM. The word ‘university’ also appeared in the secondary data word frequency, which implies whether Lenovo has its own corporate university or whether there is some kind of connection between the company and the university. The words frequency from secondary data is shown below:

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
culture	7	162	0.74%
china	5	107	0.49%
team	4	101	0.46%
management	10	87	0.40%
training	8	81	0.37%
development	11	72	0.33%
ibm	3	70	0.32%
corporate	9	64	0.29%
global	6	57	0.26%
cultural	8	54	0.25%
strategy	8	53	0.24%
different	9	51	0.23%
skills	6	51	0.23%
performance	11	50	0.23%
reward	6	49	0.22%
diversity	9	47	0.21%
talent	6	47	0.21%
language	8	46	0.21%
human	5	45	0.20%
university	10	45	0.20%
differences	11	43	0.20%
leadership	10	32	0.15%
school	6	31	0.14%
states	6	30	0.14%
international	13	29	0.13%
female	6	27	0.12%
individual	10	26	0.12%
market	6	26	0.12%
western	7	25	0.11%
challenge	9	24	0.11%
innovation	10	24	0.11%
values	6	23	0.10%
technology	10	22	0.10%
trust	5	22	0.10%
common	6	21	0.10%
communication	13	21	0.10%

(Developed by the researcher)

The word frequencies shown suggest that ‘culture’ can represent corporate culture in the secondary sources or be seen as national culture, but the relationship between the two needs to be explained in terms of secondary sources to support the interpretation of the interview data. The listed word frequencies reflect the importance of talent development such as ‘training’,

‘skills’, and ‘talent’. Combined with axial coding of secondary data, more data was interpreted as follows:

What is Lenovo’s corporate culture?

In terms of secondary data open-coding, Lenovo’s corporate culture (official culture) reflects diversity and inclusiveness, which is Lenovo’s message to the public, a company with a global cultural identity. Through the description of *The Lenovo Way* book (on behalf of post-merger culture), Lenovo’s multiculturalism is an inclusive corporate culture constructed on integrating IBM’s culture, and the western culture dominated by IBM’s culture gradually shapes the characteristics of Lenovo’s global corporate culture. Boiano (2020) concluded that Lenovo had tried to move from a national culture to a more globalised corporate culture. Consistent with this view Xu (2024) discusses that Lenovo’s culture integrated with western culture to avoid the conflict of national culture after cross-border M&A. However, this research suggests that although both Chinese and English secondary sources collected reflect the diversity as Lenovo’s globalised culture, there is a lack of secondary evidence to explain the nature of its corporate culture. Therefore, leverage the primary data collected in this research, it argues that the Lenovo global culture represents only one side of its culture, while the other side of the culture that cannot be identified through secondary data.

Is China’s State culture shaping Lenovo centralisation?

The secondary data suggest that there is a strong centralised national culture in China, and this cultural influence has spread to China’s higher education institutions, as follows:

Extract R, Journal (A Transition Perspective for Business School Research and Education in China)

“the direct government control and intervention of the sector (business school) at the regime level”

After reviewing the information published on the website (Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China) from 2019 to 2023, it was found that China is reshaping its talent market by spreading its political culture through educational reform. Specifically, China is stepping in digital transformation development and encouraging the development of digital talent through the implementation of the "One Million Youth Skills Training Programme". This research argues that the changes in China's talent market potentially affect Lenovo's HRM, it is in line with the interview data mentioned that Lenovo has upskills and reskills its talent skills internally to achieve talent intelligence transformation. Also, *China Human Resources Blue Paper* (2020) and Tan (2022) pointing to national policy support for school-enterprise cooperation, however, there is a lack of secondary data to explain Lenovo's university-enterprise cooperation projects so far, but this research's primary data fill the gap arguing that Lenovo has developed wearable smart devices through a joint research programme with Southeast University as one of evidence of university-enterprise cooperation.

Moreover, secondary data suggests that China needs the support of private enterprises in the digital transformation stage (Ye, 2014; ChinaDaily, 2021; Deloitte, 2021). Through the review of secondary data in Chinese forum the researcher found that Lenovo as a technology company participates in smart city construction by providing technology, products and services to become a supplier to local governments thereby supporting the nation's digital transformation. According to *Lenovo Group Carbon Neutral Action Report* (2022), Lenovo's R&D centres in the China expanded to Tianjin, Hefei, Wuhan, Shenzhen and Chengdu. This research argues that China's digital transformation is gradually pulling Lenovo's vision back to the domestic market, and that the digital transformation has the potential to reshape Lenovo's HRM and corporate strategy as a national cultural force. However, it is not yet known whether it has a

direct impact on the centrality of the business. Nevertheless, secondary sources indicate that Lenovo has maintained its global image through a diversified corporate culture but has gradually highlighted the national cultural characteristics it possesses in practice.

In conclusion, an axial coding analysis of participant observation data, interview data and secondary data revealed that Lenovo's cross-border acquisition (IBM pc business) combined with a Western culture dominated by IBM culture gradually shaped its global culture. This global culture also reflects its globalised identity. However, at a time when the State is advocating digital transformation, Lenovo has the potential to respond to political needs as a supplier by returning its global vision to the domestic context. At the same time, Lenovo's corporate culture has unconsciously developed as a hybrid culture. Hybrid culture exists in Lenovo as an informal or hidden culture, e.g., consisting of the national culture, the former IBM corporate culture, and the old Lenovo corporate culture. Potentially, this also reveals that there are two sides of Lenovo which a global player (global culture) and State supplier (national culture).

4.3 Interpretation of Analytical Data

This section will analyse in detail the selective coding (includes participant observation, interview, and secondary data), and then systematically interpret the findings of this research. With the thematic analysis process completed, this research suggests there are two types of cultures in Lenovo, namely formal and informal cultures. According to Mahoney and Thelen (2009, p. 15), one of the types of institutional change is 'layering' which refers to "the introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing ones". Thus, the findings are analysed by layering culture theory that includes surface (formal) culture and underneath (informal) culture. In selective coding, surface cultures were coded 347 times in 43 data documents, while

underneath cultures were coded 333 times in 37 data documents. The research findings will be extracted by the end of each section.

4.3.1 Surface – Formal culture

There are two themes in Lenovo's 'surface culture', decentralised culture and globalisation culture. This research suggests that both decentralised and globalised cultures represent Lenovo's formally visible corporate culture.

Decentralised culture

Based on the selective coding analysis, this research suggests that Lenovo's decentralised culture may be reflected in the decentralised organisational structure, organisational strategy and HRM approach.

Firstly, Lenovo's decentralised organizational structure could reflect its decentralised culture. Tzeng (2011) conducted a case study of Lenovo from 1984 to 2008 and found that in 1994 the organisational structure of Lenovo changed from a functional to a divisional organisational structure. Consistent with this view, this research found that the Lenovo still retains a divisional organizational structure that *"The top tier is the CEO (Yang Yuanqing); the second tier is the main business (including: Intelligent Device Group, Infrastructure Solutions Group, and Solutions & Services Group); the third tier is support functions (including: Lenovo Research Institute Technology Advisory Board, Marketing & Strategy, Information technology, HR, Finance, Legal, and Security)"* (Working diary: 6th July 2021). Academic studies have used the case to discuss the Lenovo structure restructuring after cross-border M&A (Zhang, 2014; Liu and Liang, 2017; Yu, Dang and Motohashi, 2019). However, studies on how Lenovo's divisional organizational structure present its decentralised culture are scarce. In line with Cao *et al.* (2021) research that Chinese MNEs adopt a divisional structure to express their

decentralised management system, this research argues that the decentralised culture in Lenovo in terms of divisional organisational structure has been reflected in the cross-departmental cooperation, which *“The organisational structure is now service oriented and brings everyone (different departments/teams) together through projects, thus increasing the efficiency of cross-departmental collaboration” (Participant 1)* whilst another participant agreed and gave an example that *“the IT team will help us with some developments, and the AI team helped us with the face recognition system” (Participant 3)*. In addition, decentralised culture reflected in organisational structure may also present in regionalisation structure development structure: *“in fact Lenovo is downplay national attributes in its development” (Participant 4)*, *“we hope that our technology can provide better convenience and efficiency to our end users, no matter which country you are in” (Participant 7)*. This research in line with Lin *et al.* (2020) study that Lenovo’s organisational structure was influenced by western managerial structure, which *“Companies tend to be vertically integrated after M&A that the leadership team has been reduced from 17 to 9, enabling unanimous decision making more quickly” (Book: The Lenovo Way)*. From the organizational structure perspective, this research suggests that Lenovo has remain developed a divisional structure, which reflects Lenovo may has a decentralised culture.

Secondly, corporate strategy may also be an expression of Lenovo’s decentralised culture. Sichen (2024) found that at the present stage, Lenovo has adopted a “defend and attack” corporate strategy. Inconsistent with this view, this research found that Lenovo’s current corporate strategy is a “One Lenovo” strategy, which *“all business and function departments in the company is supporting the ‘One Lenovo’ strategy” (Working diary: 3rd June 2021)*. The reason why this finding is inconsistent with Sichen (2024) result may be because that study focuses on the company’s market development strategy, whereas this research through participant observation identify the “One Lenovo” corporate strategy as a strategic value.

Moreover, Boiano (2020) discussed that Lenovo's "global-local" model can support the company's "defend and attack" corporate strategy. Partially in line with this view, this research found that Lenovo emphasis on global localisation in practice: *"from the inside of the company I feel the company focus a lot on the region's development more than other things"* (Participant 11) whilst another participant highlighted that *"only with global perspective plus local implementation and we can better promote international business"* (Participant 7), an example was given by one of participant: *"Lenovo's businesses other than supply chain are divided by according to geographic such as Asia Pacific region and Europe, Middle east and Africa region, North America, and Latin America"* (Participant 9). However, Feng, Liu and Liu (2023) consider the global-local model as Lenovo's business strategy. This research extends this view argues that global localisation in practice supports the core corporate strategic values of "One Lenovo", which *"the company has a general overall strategy, each place according to the development of their own industry and then develop a strategy"* (Participant 4), *"Instead of relying entirely on the headquarters to control everything (everything is controlled by Beijing headquarters), it needs local to respond and run business individually"* (Participant 7). Thus, this research suggests that that the global localisation model may be a practical manifestation reflecting the "One Lenovo" corporate strategy and may also be a signal performance its decentralised culture.

Lastly, from HRM management perspectives, Lenovo's decentralised culture is reflected in its talent management. Warner and Nankervis (2012) found that Lenovo's HRM structure shifted from a centralised model to a more decentralised one. Recent research discusses that Lenovo has a decentralised model in its globalisation development (Lin *et al.*, 2020; Rashidin *et al.*, 2020; Xia, Li and He, 2023; Lan, 2024). However, there is a lack of empirical research on how the decentralised model is reflected in Lenovo's HRM. This research found that Lenovo applies

the global-local model to overseas talent recruitment that *“the company hires local talent in overseas, and only sends expatriate abroad when local talent is not ready”* (Book: *The Lenovo Way*). Local managers in some large companies have the power to recruit is a manifestation of decentralisation (Green, 2005; Chen, Jungbauer and Wang, 2023). Consistent with this view, the research suggests that the global localisation model employed by Lenovo in overseas recruitment may reflect its decentralised culture. In terms of talent development, this research found that Lenovo’s decentralised culture is reflected in employees have more freedom in training systems, which *“learning by doing, you have to be on the job to understand the requirements of the job, and at the same time to do this thing to improve your personal ability”* (Participant 7). Participant observation data also seems to confirm that employees continue to learn by doing: *“A manager was ‘coaching’ a new employee to minimise ‘reply to all’ in replying to emails”* (Working diary: 8th June 2021). It is argued that the decentralisation of training to junior staff could be a risk to the organisation (Away *et al.*, 2021). Contrary to this view, this research argues that Lenovo’s decentralised culture in talent development potentially allows employees to learn more from work experience and colleagues in practice rather than through mandatory training courses. In addition, for the HRM style this research suggests that Lenovo has present its decentralised culture by integrating western management styles, which *“Yang Yuanqing (CEO of Lenovo) has been trying to cultivate a more Western management style, for example, remove titles and last names in the workplace to eliminate hierarchy by using first names instead”* (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). This is consistent with the argument that the decentralised of HRM is a retention of Western characteristics by Chinese MNEs (Cooke, Schuler and Varma, 2020; Farley, Hoenig and Yang, 2020; Warner, 2020; Wen, 2021). Although the recent literature does not indicate how Lenovo’s HRM reflects a decentralised culture, this research found that the level of flexibility of internal employees potentially indicates its decentralised culture that *“internal transfer is more popular within company”*

(Participant 4) whilst another participant agreed that “it is quite common to change positions within the company” (Participant 6). At the same time, the company also encourage internal transfer that “For the purpose of providing more development opportunities for the internal personnel, the internal applicants are entitled to have a priority in the recruitment (so long as) they are as good as other external candidates in all the other aspects” (Document: Lenovo Recruitment Policy), “Lenovo has strengthened its employee redeployment process” (Liu, 2010). The high degree of functional flexibility of employees may reflect a potential manifestation of Lenovo’s decentralised culture, however, the data in the participant observation and interview shows that employee internal transfers do not appear to be an easy thing, it may provide a signal for the subsequent interpretation that Lenovo also has a centralised side to its culture.

Overall, this research found that Lenovo’s decentralised culture is reflected in its organisational structure, corporate strategy, and HR management. Specifically, Lenovo’s current divisional organisational structure provides advantages for cross-functional cooperation. At the same time, the core corporate strategy of “One Lenovo” is supported by the application of the global-local model in HRM and operational strategy. This research suggests that the form of Lenovo’s decentralised culture may have been influenced by the risks associated with cross-border M&A, which gradually shaped the decentralised culture through the integration of Western management models.

Globalisation culture

Based on the selective coding analysis, this research suggests that Lenovo’s globalisation culture may be reflected in its globalisation strategy, corporate culture and global HRM.

Firstly, Lenovo's global strategy could reflect its globalised culture. Feng, Liu and Liu (2023) found that Lenovo's globalised identity has matured from 2015 to the present. Extending this view, this research found that Lenovo's global identity has matured due to the company operates globally that *"the Chinese market only accounts for a quarter of its business, while the overseas market accounts for 3/4 of its business"* (Participant 8), *"We are exceedingly proud to be a truly global citizen"* (Lenovo, 2024). Lenovo's global strategy is also reflected in the adoption of a dual headquarters model referring to one in Beijing and the other in Raleigh (Xu *et al.*, 2016; Liu and Liang, 2017; Zhang and Yang, 2018; Lin *et al.*, 2020). Apart from this, this research found that the Lenovo R&D centres, factories and call centres are also spread across the globe. However, a participant joked *"our marketing team is doing a good job of making people think we are a global company"* (Participant 7), it shows that this participant may not agree that Lenovo is a global company and suggests that Lenovo is not actually a fully global company, leaving the door open for subsequent discussions about Lenovo not having a global culture by nature. In addition, an active commitment to local charity indirectly demonstrates Lenovo's sense of responsibility as a company that embraces a global culture, which *"The Beijing headquarters holds charity sales regularly"* (Working diary: 13th August 2021), *"a total of US\$42,000 has been donated to the Lenovo Foundation each week"* (Report: Lenovo internal media). Yu (2021) discusses corporate charitable giving by CMNEs as a way to gain benefits, contrary to this opinion, this research argues that Lenovo's corporate giving is a symbol of global culture as it shows the company has social responsibility. Moreover, Guo and Zhao (2023) emphasise that Lenovo has initiated an "endogenous externalisation" mechanism in order to export its digital capabilities. Extending this view that this research argues the digital transformation strategy also indirectly reflects its global identity that *"Digital transformation business drives global revenue growth, e.g. Smart Infrastructure revenue growth of 21 per cent in 2021"* (Report: Lenovo annual report 2020-2021). Therefore, from

Lenovo's global identity cognition to its global strategy manifested through corporate giving and digital transformation strategic development reflects that Lenovo may have a global culture. Meanwhile the global culture has helped Lenovo to remain as a global player. On the other hand, as joking from one of interviewees there is a question mark to whether Lenovo is maintaining its global culture in practice.

Secondly, Lenovo's global corporate culture may be a direct reflection of its globalised culture. Recent studies have used the case to discuss the Lenovo's diversified corporate culture (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2020; Wu and Chernyaev, 2023). However, studies on what is Lenovo corporate culture are scarce. This research found that the "One Lenovo" culture is the core corporate culture of the company at the present stage, that *'the mission is We do what we say; We own what we do; We wow our customers'* (Book: *The Lenovo Way and Participant 6*), *"the value is Serving Our customers; Innovation; Entrepreneurship; teamwork with Integrity and Trust"* (Book: *The Lenovo Way and Participant 10*). This research extends Lin *et al.* (2020) result argues that "One Lenovo" culture emphasis on diversification of being a global company. In addition, Lenovo's diverse human capital reflects its global culture (Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023). Consistent with this view, this research argues that supporting the development of female employees indicates Lenovo's globalised culture that *"The percentage of female employees are almost over 40%"* (Working diary: 6th July 2021), it seems that Lenovo is very friendly to female employees that *"there are some good benefits for female employees"* (Participant 10) another participant added that *"especially 'new moms' that usually in the office to see the pregnant women are actually quite a lot"* (Participant 8). The company also supports the career development of female employees through different programmes, such as *"Lenovo Female Leadership Forum, New and Expectant Mothers Outreach Program, and Women's Leadership Development Program"* (Lenovo, 2024). Moreover, this research found that 'One Lenovo'

global culture might for supporting ‘One Lenovo’ global strategy: *“the core of the corporate culture is also to serve the company strategy”* (Participant 4), *“continuous innovation is part of Lenovo’s corporate strategy and corporate culture”* (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Thus, this research suggests that that the “One Lenovo” core corporate culture may represent the global culture that the company possesses, potentially reflecting an aspect of Lenovo’s diversity by supporting the career development of female employees.

Lastly, Lenovo’s global HRM may also indirectly reflect its globalised culture. From the descriptive data that talent is Lenovo’s core competency. Zhao and Du (2023) found that Lenovo actively recruits talent from around the world. Consistent with this view, this research argues that constantly attracting talent and updating the internal talent market seems to reflect global HRM in terms of a global culture. From 2021, Lenovo ‘buys’ a lot of talent that *“Up to June 2021, a total of 1,813 people were recruited globally, including 756 in the China office, the university recruiting team hired over 400 global interns”* (Report: Lenovo internal media), whilst a interviewee added that *“Lenovo is aiming to recruit 10,000 new graduates in three years (2021-2024)”* (Participant 7), another respondent explained the reason why company decided to do so that *“we are going to spend a lot of money on technology development this year, so we are investing a lot of money in recruiting talent”* (Participant 6). Potentially, this research extends Feng, Liu and Liu (2023) research that ‘buying’ as much multilingual talent as possible could help Lenovo consolidate its global position, therefore, to enhance their global culture, which *“there are reasons for choosing specific cities in the company’s own strategic layout, for example, in Dalian, there are many multilingual talents available, i.e. Japanese, English, Korean and Mandarin speakers”* (Participant 7) whilst another interviewee added that *“I used to speak English and Spanish and now I have been living in China for long time so I can speak Chinese”* (Participant 11). Thus, through the evidence of Lenovo’s large scale

‘buying’ of talent and its emphasis on multilingual talent seems to show that the company has global cultural traits, at least in terms of talent acquisition.

In addition, there is standardisation as a process of establishing global institution-building (Braun, 2019). This research suggests that Lenovo’s adoption of a global HR strategy may also reflect its global culture in HRM. Farndale and Paauwe (2005) believe that HR in MNEs is faced with the challenge of balancing a standardised HR strategy with a localised HR strategy. Although the data collected in this research cannot directly explain whether Lenovo’s HR strategy takes the form of global standardisation or localisation, the rewarding of stock options to employees as a monetary incentive mechanism may reflect Lenovo is difference from traditional Chinese firms. In terms of talent acquisition channels, Lenovo’s online recruitment approach in China favours the use of social media that *“Lenovo recruiting team promotes job descriptions with live streaming on TikTok”* (Picture: screenshot from TikTok), *“using the WeChat platform to post Lenovo job openings information”* (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). As the fieldwork was conducted in China, this research may not be able to explain Lenovo’s recruitment and incentivisation in its overseas subsidiaries and suggests that Lenovo’s HRM in China may have more global culture compared to previous Lenovo as its convergence with Western HRM. HR Business Partners come from a Western management model that has helped Chinese companies to innovate in HRM (Duport and Janicot, 2016). This research extends this view argues that the role of HR Business Partner in Lenovo as a bridge that *“support other function team or business in HR aspect”* (Working diary: 5th July2021), at the same time, the organizational development team in Lenovo as a glue that *“improve organisational capabilities by aligning corporate strategy, organisational structure, management processes, and performance metrics”* (Report: Lenovo internal media). This may reflect through the convergence of western HRM gradually form of Lenovo’s HRM with global cultural

characteristics. Moreover, this research is in line with (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020) who argue that the management and working style may suggest that Lenovo is still converging with Western global culture: *“I feel company tries to promote western traditional model in terms of management” (Participant 1)*, whilst a participant gave an example that *“no overtime culture” (Participant 10)* and another participant agreed that *“encourages us not to work overtime” (Participant 8)*. As most traditional Chinese companies advocate behaviours such as overtime for their employees, this also seems to reveal Lenovo’s convergence with Western work styles in a global cultural context, thus reinforcing its global cultural identity. What is more, the relaxed atmosphere of the workplace reflects the inclusiveness of a global culture that *“There is a climbing wall at Beijing Headquarters office and has a gym with regular yoga classes” (Picture: from participant observation)*. As a result, Lenovo is converging with the Western work environment and style to demonstrate its global culture, both in terms of HR strategy and HRM. However, Rashidin *et al.* (2020) argues that only Huawei is a truly global company in China, while Lenovo is still on its way to becoming a truly global company. This research agrees with this view, more interpretation on Lenovo may not be a fully global company is given in the next section, but this research also argues that Lenovo has global cultural traits to some extent.

Overall, Lenovo’s global culture is reflected in its corporate strategy, globalised corporate culture and HRM. Specifically, Lenovo’s globalisation strategy maintains its identity as a global player, while the “One Lenovo” globalised corporate culture not only supports its globalisation strategy but also supports the career development of female employees reflecting that global culture is characterised by diversity and inclusiveness. Globalisation culture is also potentially highlighted through the tendency to converge on Western culture, it may have indirectly shaped Lenovo’s globalised culture. Thus, the finding under this theme is:

Finding 1: Lenovo may have a decentralised and globalised culture that integrates Western culture.

4.3.2 Underneath – Informal culture

There are two themes under underneath culture, which are centralised domestic culture and subculture. This research suggests that both centralised domestic culture and subculture in practice may represent Lenovo's informally invisible (or hidden) corporate culture as another side of culture.

Centralised domestic culture

Based on the selective coding analysis, this research is going to analyse whether Lenovo may have a centralised domestic culture as a result of strengthening the Beijing headquarters in the global position.

Firstly, an argument that Chinese MNEs (such as Lenovo and Xiaomi) are more hierarchical is certainly not new (Wan, Williamson and Yin, 2019), but in research had been found more evidence demonstrate Lenovo's bureaucracy organizational structure in practice that may present its centralised culture that *"most of time are (project is in pending) waiting in line manager's approval"* (Working diary: 29th July 2021), *"Lenovo's hierarchy in China is stricter, which is reflected in the complex and bureaucratic reporting relationship"* (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). However, inconsistent with the previous section discussion that Lenovo has a divisional corporate structure (Tzeng, 2011), most interviewees believe that it seems more effective divisional organisational structure does not occur in practice because the nature of Lenovo's organizational structure is actually centralised: *"bureaucracy is inevitable at Lenovo, cross-departments cooperation is like a concept that exists in the company and is not as easy to implement"* (Participant 1) whilst another interviewee complained that *"sometimes is difficult*

in communicating and coordinating with different departments to solve the problem” (Participant 10). Cao et al. (2021, p. 4) suggests that: “The multidivisional structure is a decentralised management system with high-level centralisation”. This research extends this view by arguing that in Lenovo practice it is likely to be a centralised dominated divisional organizational structure that “(bureaucracy) actually is a way how we work, especially, with the pandemic situation I saw the movement more focus on the centralised power” (Participant 11), “The appearance of decentralisation is presented to the public, such as a global-local model, and if you look at it internally, Lenovo China tends to be more centralised from globally perspective” (Participant 4). In response, one participant attempted to explain why the centralised structure is represented in practice, that “complex reporting lines are not displayed in organisational charts, and I personally believe that the top-down model developed by the group relates to the CEO, as YY (Yang Yuanqing) is a party member of the CCP and is therefore influenced by the political environment in China” (Participant 9). This point in line with Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai (2023) argument that the CCP controls private enterprises by establishing party branches within the enterprises through existing party members. Potentially, this research argues that centralised culture in Lenovo’s practice may be influenced by the domestic Chinese culture, especially the political culture.

This research suggests that Lenovo’s centralised culture gradually manifests itself in practice and may be more evident in the company’s intelligent transformation stage. Guo and Zhao (2023) examined the internal motivation for Lenovo’s digital transformation as a lack of core competence in terms of technology after M&A integration. Consistent with this view, this research suggests that the digital transformation development could make up for losses from the company’s other businesses as one interviewee emphasised the continuing decline of Lenovo’s PC business in the overall market, which meant that the company had to transform

in order to achieve longer-term growth. Recent research has found that the Chinese government under Xi Jinping is blurring the concepts of State-owned and private enterprises through corporate governance practices (Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022). This study agrees with this view finding that Lenovo's digital transformation is not a "nice to have" but a "must have" in the context of China's national digital transformation strategy and argues that this appears to be a centralisation of Lenovo's development towards Beijing (China) as domestic government creates market demand that *"there are still many opportunities for Lenovo, whether from government, healthcare or city water systems"* (Participant 8). It is in line with Guo and Zhao (2023) finding that the external motivation for Lenovo's digital transformation is receiving strong support from national level. Thus, this research suggests that the impact of "State intervention" may gradually shape the centralised culture within the company during the digital transformation stage. At the same time, it seems that nation's digital transformation needs private sector support in city governance (Ye, 2014; ChinaDaily, 2021). In response, this research found that Lenovo is not only developing its digital transformation business, but also participating as a national supplier in national smart transformation implementation projects: *"The State Grid of China is an external customer of Lenovo"* (Participant 9), *"Healthcare big data cooperation with the People's Liberation Army General Hospital"* (Picture: Lenovo internal media), and *"Participation in the transformation project of China Petroleum & Chemical Corporation"* (Website: Chinese Forum). However, the attitude of a few interviewees suggests that Lenovo is not only as simple as participating in the State's digital transformation projects that *"I think that Lenovo represents the character of a national digital transformation development"* (Participant 1), *"the overall strategic direction of Lenovo's development is more government-led"* (Participant 9). Academic discussion of Lenovo is receiving support from the domestic government is relatively new (Hu, 2020; Rashidin *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021c; Guo and Zhao, 2023), and this research extends

the discussion by using interview data to argue that Lenovo may have benefited from the State-created advantages to become a leader in representing country's digital transformation strategy while an internal centralised culture gradually revealed itself in the process.

Secondly, the previous paragraph discussed how Lenovo as a whole may have demonstrated a centralised culture through its digital development strategy, from a globalisation perspective, this research suggests that Lenovo strengthened Beijing headquarters position may also present its centralised culture. Through the previous formal culture discussion, it suggests that Lenovo adopts a dual headquarters model after M&A to performance its globalised culture (Xu *et al.*, 2016; Liu and Liang, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2020), however, in contrast to this viewpoint, this research here argues that Lenovo may be focusing more attention on its Beijing headquarters status at this stage as mentioned by a colleague during the participant observation period that "*Lenovo has cancelled its headquarters in Raleigh, North Carolina, following the Lenovo scandal in 2019 because Lenovo has been called a 'foreign company' by Chinese citizen*" (Working diary: 5th August 2021). When the researcher interned with the global HR team most of the employees were Chinese, while a few were foreigners overseas. This seems imply the closure of the United States headquarters was symbolic in that, although Raleigh was no longer the headquarters, much of its role may have remained in practice. This fits into 'bury *The Lenovo Way* book' story where the book representing the success of its cultural acquisitions was stored in a warehouse and not destroyed, which seems the book is no longer important at this stage.

Also, Feng, Liu and Liu (2023) found that Lenovo started to continuously start splitting the company into 8 independent companies by investing in incubation business from 2018. This research in line with their research and extends this view argues that "*Lenovo adopted the Zone*

to Win corporate management mode in 2018” (Working diary: 27th July 2021) may presents its power-centralised ambition to concentrate its core incubation business in Beijing headquarters. While the formal culture discusses that Lenovo’s global culture could be seen its R&D centres in globally, this research found that Lenovo’s expansion of its R&D centres in China as well that *“Lenovo’s domestic R&D centres continue to expand to more cities, while offices are located in more than 16 cities across the country” (Report: Lenovo Carbon Neutral Action Report 2022)*. This research argues that the reason for the centralisation of Lenovo’s R&D centres towards China may be because *“the biggest shareholder of Lenovo is Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), a large part of the funding is for scientific research funded by the State” (Working diary: 19th July 2021)*. It in line with Li and Lazonick (2022) argument that Lenovo utilised the scientific and technological resources of CAS. Thus, this research suggests that Lenovo’s centralised culture may potentially reflected through the strengthening of Beijing Headquarters position by increasing its R&D capabilities in Beijing.

Moreover, from HRM perspective, this research suggests that Lenovo is emphasis on domestic talent market may be demonstrate its centralised culture of concentrating on its Beijing headquarters. Tan (2022) identified that the intervention of Chinese political culture in Chinese higher education institution has been bred a new management model with Chinese characteristics: university-enterprise co-operation. Consistent with this view, this research found that this new talent development and management model is also visible at Lenovo that *“we have done a project in China directly with Tsinghua University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University on talent development” (Participant 7)*, *“joint laboratory with Southeast University” (Picture: Lenovo internal media)*.

Thirdly, this research suggests that Lenovo's centralised culture may be influenced by Chinese national culture in terms of high-power distance. Some Chinese MNEs includes Lenovo have transformed into global players but have not changed their Chinese management philosophy significantly. (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020). Extending this view, this research argues that despite Lenovo integrated IBM's Western culture, the nature of the culture at this stage in practice may still have the blood of Chinese national culture flowing through it as "*Eventually the company changed to use East model*" (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Previous studies have discussed Chinese MNEs could not to escape from domestic cultural values that emphasise obedience in a hierarchical system (Pun, Chin and Lau, 2000; Shambaugh, 2012). This research found that strong power distance may be a manifestation reflecting Chinese domestic culture that "*I don't really have much decision-making power*" (Participant 4) whilst another interviewee reflected that "*I have heard another leader reprimand a subordinate while in the work corridor once*" (Participant 8). Lenovo has shifted from traditional top-down style seems to reflect the Western culture of Chinese CMNEs oriented towards low-power distance culture (Hua, 2020). Contrary to this view, this research found that Lenovo in practice may have high-power distance culture by remaining top-down style, that "*there are barriers to communication between departments*" (Participant 9), "*Lenovo is strong Top-down leadership, the things can be done only have top leader support*" (Working diary: 14th August 2021). Thus, this research suggests that Lenovo may have a centralised culture shaped by the national culture, this high-power distance seems potentially to demonstrate typical Chinese paternalistic mindset that in line with Shambaugh (2012) finding.

Overall, this research found that Lenovo's centralised culture could only be seen in in the environment of its domestic market, Lenovo's organisational structure reveals bureaucracy in practice. Secondly, the market opportunity (demand) created by the national digital

transformation strategy attracted Lenovo to return its vision to the domestic market and thus become a national supplier as well as receive strong backing from the State gradually shaping its nationalistic development. Finally, the State's intervention in the education system to develop school-enterprise co-operation programmes drove Lenovo to consolidate its Beijing headquarters position through the expansion of its domestic R&D centre and its keen participation in school-enterprise co-operation projects. This may represent that Lenovo is not a fully global company due to the high-power distance or paternalistic mindset reflecting its significant influenced by centralised domestic culture. Therefore, the finding under this theme is:

Finding 2: Lenovo may have a centralised culture in practice that is influenced by domestic national culture.

Subculture

This research is going to analysis the possibility that the subculture reflected by a post M&A culture and team culture may also be part of Lenovo's informal culture, in addition to a centralised culture.

First of all, this research suggests that at the present stage post M&A culture exists in Lenovo as an informal culture possibly due to cultural integration at the time of cross-border acquisitions, specifically, after 2005 there were three incompatible culture in Lenovo, which are Lenovo culture, IBM culture, and Dell culture (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Despite recent studies discussing the management of corporate culture integration after M&A (Rodríguez-Sánchez, Mora-Valentín and Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, 2021; Ahmad, Aziz and Dowling, 2022; Sales *et al.*, 2022), there is a lack of empirical perspectives considering the time dimension to discuss the current State of culture in M&A firms after culture integration. To interpretive this point, it needs to analysis how far has Lenovo undertaken cultural integration after M&A. This

research found that Lenovo began to integrate its corporate culture within a few years after the cross-border acquisition because the previous Lenovo corporate culture was not able to fit in its global development, the company gradually integrated the western culture dominated by IBM culture to shape its diversified (or multinational) corporate culture. In order to consolidate the integrated culture Lenovo created position of Chief Diversity Officer (which become the first CMNE that have this role), and in the process of integrating IBM corporate culture Lenovo continued to update its corporate culture from 4P culture to 5P culture (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). It has been noted that the higher the level of integration culture between the acquiring and acquired firms, the greater the presence of ambiguity within the firm (Cording, Christmann and King, 2008). By reviewing and comparing the current “One Lenovo” corporate culture with the 4P culture and 5P culture, this research found that the corporate culture during integration stage seemed to reflect a strong previous Lenovo’s culture, and therefore agreed with Cording, Christmann and King (2008) view that Lenovo may not have not fully integrated Western culture leading hidden culture in terms of cultural ambiguity in the future. However, it argues that Lenovo current corporate culture may not fundamentally different from integrated culture as one participant believed that *“the roots of culture are still the same and will be never changed, what is different is that the cultural value because our customer base has changed”* (Participant 7). This may because corporate culture has an embedded nature (Tarba *et al.*, 2020). Thus, this research argues that although cross-border acquisitions consider cultural integration, over time the acquired company’s corporate culture and the acquiring company’s original corporate culture may manifest themselves as subcultures.

Many studies have shown Lenovo’s cultural integration to be successful (Peng, 2008; Cheng and Yang, 2010; Cui *et al.*, 2016; Xiaojun *et al.*, 2016). However, there is a study that believe it just looks successful (Zhang and Yang, 2018). In response, this research suggests that after

nearly 20 years of cultural integration, although Lenovo actively integrated the culture appears to have been successful after the M&A, the culture clash brought by the ambiguous culture integration in the merge stage may manifested at present stage. Cultural integration is more challenging for companies with a stable organisational culture (Wang *et al.*, 2008). Cheng (2020) analysed the post M&A corporate culture of Chinese companies and found that corporate culture integration requires firstly ideological culture integration, secondly institutional culture and finally image culture. Based on this view, this research argues that Lenovo may was focusing on institutional and image culture integration more rather ideological culture integration, therefore the post M&A culture clash embedded in corporation as informal culture lead to culture clash at the present. Culture clashes can come from ineffective communication leading to a loss of trust (Weber, 2013; Yahiaoui, Chebbi and Weber, 2016). Consistent with this view, this research found that effective communication in Lenovo is a problem of cultural conflict, that “*they (overseas colleagues) usually prefer to use email, which makes communication very slow and efficient is much lower than we expected*” (Participant 8). In addition, different embedded corporate cultures have differences management style could be part of culture clash in Lenovo (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). Due to the lack of case studies on Lenovo through an empirical perspective in recent studies, this research argues through interviews and observations that the differences in management styles and ways of thinking between the East and the West at present may reflect culture clashes. Therefore, this research suggests that ambiguous cultural integration during the merger phase may have led to the emergence of subcultures dominated by the IBM culture and the former Lenovo culture in the current phase.

Secondly, through the above discussion this research argues that Lenovo subculture as informal culture is reflected in having IBM corporate culture and Lenovo original corporate culture.

Most studies believe that national culture as a subculture that exists in the corporation cross-border M&A (Olsen and Roy-Bonde, 2008; Laneve and Stüllein, 2010; Dauber, 2012). However, this research considers acquired company's corporate culture and acquiring company's corporate culture as subculture in M&A corporation, which is different from previous studies, probably due to the different time dimension, in other words, the case selected for this research have been going through cross-border acquisitions for almost 20 years, and their subcultures may be different from when they first completed cross-border acquisitions. Martinsson and Edgren (2012) claimed that cross-border M&A often result in the two companies retaining their own corporate cultures. Consistent with this view, this research found that Lenovo used to operate two corporate cultures, and one participant argues that: *"it is impossible for a company always to have two cultures (IBM culture and Lenovo culture)" (Participant 1)*. After M&A, Lenovo chosen to convergence with IBM's corporate culture possibility attempts to retain old IBM employees that *"The decision by Lenovo's top management to bring in IBM executives to help with operations, because it meant IBM employees continued to work with previous style and the leaders who they more familiarly and trusted"* (Qiao and Conyers, 2015). As Lenovo's corporate culture keeps renewing, the IBM corporate culture faded but not disappearing, that *"The department I work in now is the department that was merged with IBM pc business at that time, they still maintain the IBM working style"* (Participant 10). Similarly, in the participant observation the researcher found features of the original Lenovo corporate culture, such as an emphasis on execute and work hard. Interview data also reveal that these characteristics are likely to be part of Lenovo's original corporate culture that *"we (as well as corporate culture) attach great importance to the ability to execute"* (Participant 7), *"the Lenovo's original culture reflected down-to-earth work and a strong sense of responsibility among employees"* (Participant 9). Thus, this research argues that Lenovo's original corporate culture has shifted into a subculture under the global

culture, as one of the participants argued that *“the roots of culture will not change”* (Participant 7). For the IBM culture, this research suggests that with the end of cultural integration nearly 20 years ago, the power of the IBM corporate culture gradually blurred, will not disappear completely. It is worth emphasising that the subculture potentially be reflected through former IBM employees and old Lenovo employees (who have worked at Lenovo before M&A).

Lastly, this research suggests that the team culture may also be a subculture in Lenovo. Team cultures were commonly mentioned by the participants in the interviews, which led the researcher to consider that potentially team (departmental) cultures are also a type of subculture that as an informal culture underneath of corporate culture. Recent research suggests that team culture is different from organizational culture, it is as an organisational subculture is often shaped through the unique values of the team (Asatiani *et al.*, 2021; Patrucco, Canterino and Minelgaite, 2022; Sharma and Aparicio, 2022). Consistent with this view, the research argues that team culture may reflect its departmental working atmosphere in Lenovo that *“I can sense what the team culture is from the colleagues behaviour”* (Participant 10), *“Sometimes there is a culture that is the result of the characteristics (working patterns) that we have accumulated over the years working together, these characteristics are a symbol of the image of the department (something representative)”* (Participant 7), whilst another interviewee gave an example that *“in our team we have team culture that we dress unlike colleagues from other teams, for example we wear hoodies often”* (Participant 11). On the other hand, it has been argued that the role of the team manager cannot be ignored in team culture (Majeed and Jamshed, 2021; Newman and Ford, 2021; Tiliuta and Diaconu, 2021). In line with Newman and Ford (2021) research argues that Lenovo team members may rely on leaders to define and maintain team culture, which *“team manager determines the overall style of doing things”*

(Participant 10), "it is team manager's responsibility to lead the team culture development" (Participant 6). This research suggests that whilst leadership may steer the direction of the team culture to a certain extent, the gradual development of the team's cultural ambience subconsciously reinforces that culture.

Overall, Lenovo's subculture is unique that includes post-acquisition culture and team culture. This research contributes a new finding in that the legacy of both the IBM corporate culture and the previous Lenovo corporate culture survive as subcultures in Lenovo. The legacy of IBM's corporate culture comes from when Lenovo integrated IBM's corporate culture. The former Lenovo corporate culture may be 'deep-rooted' in the behaviour of older employees. Potentially, this reveals that the culture does not permanently disappear but may be invisibly embedded in employee behaviour. In addition, the presence of team culture as a subculture at Lenovo was unexpected, it suggests that the team culture could be shaped by team manager, it could be formed by the nature of the work of the team as a whole. Therefore, the finding under this theme is:

Finding 3: Lenovo may have subcultures consisting of IBM culture, Lenovo's original culture and team culture.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the results of the participant observation data, interview data and secondary data analyses. And this chapter describes the data and analyses the data from different data sources separately. These data reflect the understanding of Lenovo's culture from both internal and external perspectives. The findings of the primary data highlight the contribution to this research by confirming that the new dimension of Lenovo culture refers to layering culture, in other words, the findings suggest that a hybrid culture has always existed in Lenovo that that has been shaped by a combination of different cultural forces. The next

chapter discusses more details based on the research questions, which will provide an integrated discussion of all the findings and literature review.

Chapter V: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture in general and its hybrid culture, in particular what shapes its hybrid culture by discussing the past literatures and findings from analytical data discussion (section 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). Several studies have begun to discuss the hybrid cultures (Zhang, 2012a; Gratton, 2021; Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021; Yousfi, 2021), but they do not seem to in-depth study what is hybrid culture. The exploration of hybrid culture in this research contributes a new understanding of this term (hybrid culture), which refers not simply mix up two different cultures, but a movement among different cultures. Although some research identified that Lenovo has hybrid culture when acquiring IBM PC business as the need for cultural integration (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Kang, 2015; Zhang and Wang, 2015; Cui *et al.*, 2016), seems there is none research address the what hybrid culture actually is in Lenovo. Thus, this chapter will be based on this argument to discuss the exploration of Lenovo's hybrid culture.

This chapter is going to present the discussion of findings and focus the discussion under the main research questions as:

To what extent does Lenovo have hybrid culture?

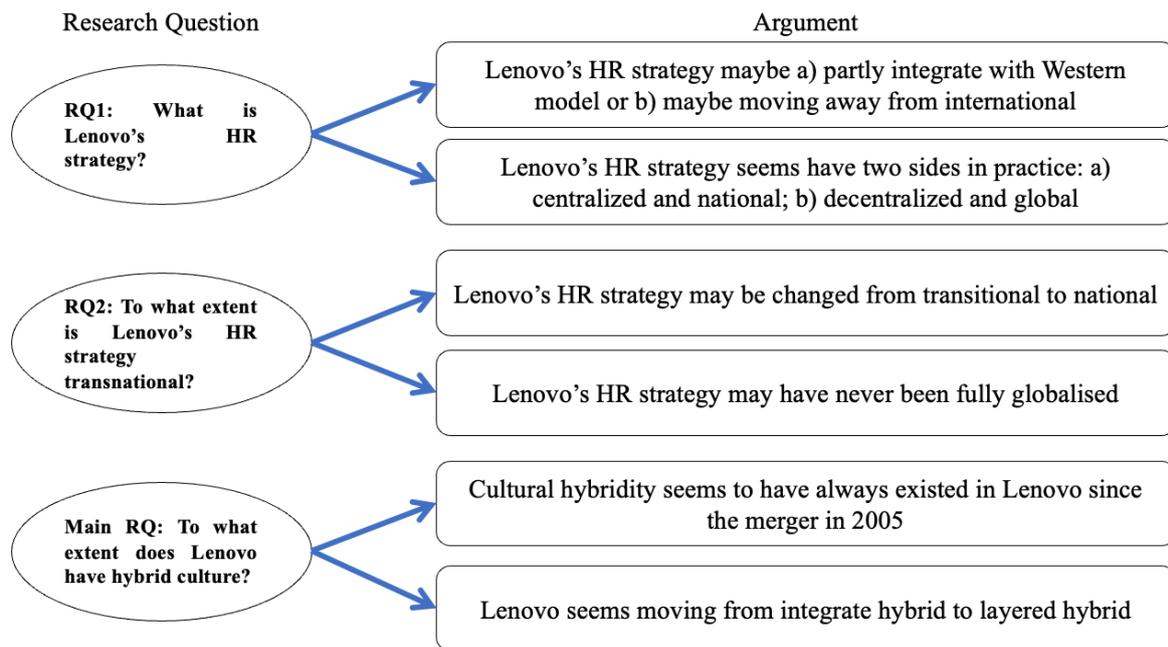
In order to answer the research questions, this chapter will discuss two sub research questions first as:

What is Lenovo's HR strategy?

To what extent is Lenovo's HR strategy transnational?

The aim of this research has been to investigate the extent to which the national culture and post-acquisition culture have been influenced on its corporate culture change. The argument in this chapter is shown as below:

Figure 5.1 Demonstration of research question arguments



(Developed by the researcher)

This chapter will start with a discussion of findings from the previous chapter to answer the two-sub research questions and objectives before addressing the discussion of key findings from main research question, and finally gives the conclusion to this chapter via filling the research gaps.

5.2 Discussion of Research Questions

In this section, the research questions are discussed in relation to the thesis findings and previous literatures and extract the key findings of this thesis.

5.2.1 Research question 1: What is Lenovo's HR strategy?

Primarily, the empirical data of this research show the core of Lenovo's HR strategy is reflected in its OTM team, including the talent acquisition strategy, talent development and training strategy, organizational culture strategy, organizational development strategy, and rewards strategy. Each team plays an integral role, and all function team seems to support the

development of Lenovo core corporate strategy in different ways. Take an example of organizational development team, it seems to be more like the glue that exists at Lenovo that reshaping organisational structure through developing internal projects that promote cross-functional communication and cooperation. On the other hand, it supports the company's internal digital transformation strategy by shaping the development of internal talent. Warner and Nankervis (2012) found that that Lenovo's HR practice is partly convergent and partly divergent from Western HRM by comparing the cases of three Chinese multinationals. Consistent with this view, this research argues that the current Lenovo HR strategy may reflect the coexistence of a Western global management side and a Chinese characteristics management side. The possible explanation for Lenovo having a global management side is the integration of HR after cross-border M&A (Zhao and Du, 2023). As for Chinese characteristics management side, this may be reflected in the fact that Lenovo may not be fully globalised in nature (Rashidin *et al.*, 2020). In addition, Babu, Li and Hou (2020) suggests that the main tasks of Lenovo's HR strategy are talent pool and corporate culture management. In line with this view, the empirical data found that Lenovo's HR strategy in practice may strengthen its talent pool by "buying" and "building" talent, one possible reason is that the need for digital talent becomes more and more evident during the digital transformation phase (Gilch and Sieweke, 2021; Liu, 2023). This could be a hint at the need to enhance talent pool to support digital transformation businesses at a stage when Lenovo is gradually moving away from globalisation.

For the talent acquisition strategy, the empirical data suggests that HR strategy develops external and internal recruitment channels, which in line with (Chen, 2006) research. In external recruitment channels, in addition to combining traditional recruitment channels (such as headhunting, website, and job fair), the recruitment strategy gradually began to use social

media in China to promote job vacancy in the form of live streaming on TikTok. Brewster *et al.* (2016) believe that international graduate programme could be one of the approaches of external recruitment. This is supported by the data, which have identified that the University Graduate Program in Lenovo helps company target potentially fresh graduates in the first instance. In internal recruitment, the research found that the company encourages internal transfer of employees in addition to giving preference to internal employees, which may be the cost potentially lower costs of transferring existing employees. Although the policy of internal transfer is well known at Lenovo and the company encourages employee experience different role in different department, it is not easy in practice as there are many pre-conditions that prevent employees from job transferring. It suggests Lenovo as a transnational company in fact not very flexible even within headquarters and it hints Lenovo may have another side apart from transnational, another possible explanation could be the researcher assumes employees are more willing to stay in where they are.

We have discussed Lenovo's HR strategy in terms of recruitment and talent acquisition, now move on to training. For the talent development and training strategy, the empirical data suggest that the core training philosophy in Lenovo follows 70% - 20% - 10% principle, which in line with (McCall, Lombardo and Morrison, 1988; Wick, 1989; Noe *et al.*, 1997) research that 70 per cent learning and growing on the job. In the finding chapter, most participants rely on learning from colleagues while some of them said they would not voluntarily choose an available sources option despite the company offering the professional training sessions. This argues that training strategy in Lenovo seems more decentralised that let employees have more freedom to choose the way to learning rather than set compulsory learning sessions.

For organizational culture strategy, as finding chapter discussed the Lenovo's official culture is 'One Lenovo' and cultural team organised many cultural events in support of 'One Lenovo' culture. Interestingly, the 'One Lenovo' culture itself seems imply there could be two Lenovo, therefore the company needs to highlight that there is only one Lenovo through its official culture, this could be where the layered culture begins. Also, Lenovo mascot design competition emphasises Lenovo has layering culture, this research argues that mascot design competition seems to performative that culture team organised this and selected who won but the company did not use the final mascot. Recent studies suggest that Lenovo's corporate culture is characteristic of a globalised company (Boiano, 2020; Xu, 2024). Although the empirical data does not deny that the "One Lenovo" corporate culture has traces of global culture, this research believes that this is only one side of Lenovo's corporate culture that has surfaced. In addition, recent studies have shown that corporate culture affects employee performance and behaviour (Fidyah and Setiawati, 2020; Nguyen, Yandi and Mahaputra, 2020; Paaais and Pattiruhu, 2020; Akpa, Asikhia and Nneji, 2021). Consistent with this view, the researcher found that the constant presence of corporate culture activities does have an unconsciously impact on employee behaviour in terms of working patterns, and shapes employees to become representatives of the corporate culture as a "form of control".

Overall, the current Lenovo HR strategy is discussed through the talent recruitment strategy, talent development strategy and corporate culture strategy and reflects the role of HRM in Lenovo as a catalyst to support talent management. This research argues that Lenovo's HR strategy might present Lenovo has a globalised aspect, which is only one side of Lenovo, while the other side is underneath reflecting the side of its practice. Thus, one of the key findings as:

Answer to research question 1: Lenovo may have two sides as reflected through its HR strategy.

5.2.2 Research question 2: To what extent is Lenovo's HR strategy transnational?

Although recent studies have concluded that Lenovo's HR strategy demonstrates its international HRM (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Boiano, 2020; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023; Zhao and Du, 2023; Xu, 2024), the researcher argues that the answer to this research question is yes and no. The answer is yes because Lenovo's HR strategy is closely related to the company's strategy, the company's strategy reflects Lenovo gradually shift from multinational to domestic development under digital transformation period. On the other hand, Lenovo's global identity is ambiguity.

Specifically, this research suggests that the development of digital transformation in China may be a driving force for Lenovo to gradually move from being a global player to a national representative. The extension of State government control into Chinese private enterprise has resulted in an increasing blurring of the line between government and business (Blanchette, 2020; Zhong and Stevenson, 2021; Pearson, Rithmire and Tsai, 2022). Some research believes BRI as a national strategy has fostered the overseas development of Chinese private enterprises (Su and Flew, 2021; Wang, 2022a; Crabtree, 2023). However, this research found that digital transformation as the State-created advantage promotes synergies between Lenovo and the development of the domestic market. The participant observation data reflects Lenovo is actively commitment to the company's digital transformation, while the interview data suggests that this may be due to Lenovo could potentially access to more participation in national digital transformation opportunities (e.g. smart city infrastructure building projects) in the context of national digital transformation. Lenovo's digital transformation is externally driven by support at the national level (Guo and Zhao, 2023), this research extends this view by suggesting that Lenovo is likely to receive strong backing from the State in terms of R&D and technology, it is in line with Li and Lazonick (2022) finding that Lenovo Research Institute

may benefit from CAS. Moreover, Lenovo cancelled the dual headquarters model, this research argues that Lenovo gradually becoming a national supplier may downplay Lenovo's multinational identity.

Under digital transformation era, this research suggests that the movement of Lenovo returning to domestic country may shift its HR strategy moving from transnational to national. Firstly, Feng, Liu and Liu (2023) pointed out that Lenovo's talent acquisition strategy has become more focused on the domestic labour market. This is supported by the empirical data, which have identified that from 2021 Lenovo recruit one-third of the world's labour market in China. One possible reason could be that Lenovo may centralise its talent management towards its Beijing headquarters as digital talent is needed for the domestic digital transformation business. Secondly, university-enterprise co-operation as a new management model with Chinese characteristics stimulates the maturation of the "double-base" model based on enterprises and universities (Tan, 2022). The empirical data demonstrate that Lenovo not only conducts talent development programmes with top Chinese universities, but also develops R&D programmes with local technology universities. Lastly, from a cultural perspective, the empirical data finds that the characteristics of high-context culture and high-power distance are very common in Lenovo's Beijing headquarters. This research extends Shambaugh (2012) findings by arguing that Lenovo seems does not appear to be free from the influence of its domestic culture. From a HR strategy perspective, this research argues that Lenovo may be influenced by the domestic national culture leading to a shift from transnational to national, which was also recognised in the Finding 2 that Lenovo's bureaucratic in practice, centralised towards to Beijing and high-power distance culture reflect a centralised domestic culture. This in line with (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020) research that although Lenovo has become a global player, it seems that the nature of its HRM has not departed from the Chinese philosophy. Therefore, this research suggests

that the State is not taking Lenovo back from global, but there is constrain framework limit Lenovo's globalisation, thus it seems Lenovo moving away from globalisation and towards national.

Another possibility considered in this research is that Lenovo's global identity is ambiguous in nature. It may not be clear how far does Lenovo's HR strategy moving from global to national, but what is clear is that some employees say is less global than before. In the finding chapter, there is an example from observation data about an employee posted a statement: 'Lenovo is a global company', this confirmed the live debate within company that the identity of Lenovo is ambiguity. What is more, the 'One Lenovo' culture slogan sounds ambiguity as well and the culture team is keeping functioning rather resolving. This seems imply company tends to promote its global identify, however, in practice it may be not so-call global. In addition, *The Lenovo Way* was celebrating its global culture after merger, and some researchers used this book as a symbol of Lenovo successfully integrated IBM's corporate culture (Stahl and Lengyel, 2013; Liu and Liang, 2017; Boiano, 2020). However, empirical data found that Lenovo has now hidden all brand-new books in a warehouse almost 20 years after the acquisition of IBM PC business may suggest that it may be attempting to downplay this experience. One possible explanation is that Lenovo may not a truly global company (Rashidin *et al.*, 2020). Consistent with this view, although (Tzeng, 2011) believes that Lenovo's divisional corporate structure is an expression of the company's embrace of globalisation, this research believes that it does not seem to be reflected in the practice of the Beijing headquarters instead more bureaucratic. In addition, the researcher argues that Lenovo may not have fully become a globalised company because Lenovo's cultural integration into the Western culture dominated by IBM culture seems to have been successful (Zhang and Yang, 2018), the empirical data found that the cultural conflicts existing in the company over time may reflect

the pitfalls of cultural integration at that time. Thus, this research identified that cross-border acquisitions may have helped Lenovo quickly become a global player, but essentially Lenovo may have been characterised as a local Chinese company. As Zámorský *et al.* (2023) argue that globalisation and de-globalisation are not two separate processes, this research suggests that the development of Lenovo's HR strategy may be a dynamic process, an equilibrium consisting of both centralisation and de-centralisation.

Overall, this research does not deny that Lenovo's HR strategy may still continue to be transnational due to its global characteristics (see Finding 1), but in practice, it may be more inclined to show a shift towards parent country culture due to the centralisation that is becoming increasingly evident in the Beijing headquarters (see Finding 2). This seems imply the layering culture in Lenovo, for example, company down grade US headquarters and they do not either moving employees away or reallocating in China headquarters, thus they layering culture here refers Lenovo's global identity culture and national identity culture. What is more, this research suggests that the development of Lenovo's HR strategy may be a dynamic process that influenced by layering culture and seeks a balance between a decentralised culture dominated by Western culture and a centralised culture dominated by Eastern culture. Therefore, this research argues that Lenovo's HR strategy reflects the dynamic development of its discourse, it may have demonstrated a stronger decentralised discourse when Lenovo was in the globalisation stage of development, whereas at current stage it may have demonstrated a stronger centralised discourse due to its strong nationalism. Thus, the second key finding of this thesis as:

Answer to research question 2: Lenovo's HR strategy may be a dynamic process of maintaining an equilibrium with centralisation and de-centralisation.

5.2.3 Main research question: To what extent does Lenovo have hybrid culture?

It is usually the biggest one influence the smaller on when cross-border M&A take place (Bauer and Matzler, 2014; Cui *et al.*, 2016), in the case of Lenovo acquired IBM PC business, the merger was not one as expected that China fully impact by US. This research argues that Lenovo may have become a multinational company even before M&A and company already wanted to learn more from Western, thus there are some IBM elements imitated by Lenovo, such as *The Lenovo Way* book (adapt same book name as *The IBM Way* to celebrate their globalisation). Arguably, it seems most CMNEs are hybrid as even small size Chinese enterprises are already influenced by Western model (Warner, 2003; Warner and Nankervis, 2012; Warner, 2013; Jansson and Söderman, 2015), in other words, the first multinationals in China may not follow the State model, culturally they are more likely influence by Western model. Therefore, this the research argues that hybrid culture may have always existed at Lenovo, or it may be a changing in the nature of hybridity.

Prior research has found that Lenovo's cross-border M&A have shaped its multicultural-driven hybrid culture (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Zhang and Kang, 2015; Zhang and Wang, 2015; Cui *et al.*, 2016). Although Cui *et al.* (2016) highlight the importance of cultural integration in Lenovo M&A, it is lack of elucidation of Lenovo's hybrid culture almost 20 years after the end of the acquisition. This research found that the hybrid culture in Lenovo may have never gone away. From the perspective of HRM, although it shows a tendency that Lenovo towards global convergence based on Western management practices during the cultural integration phase (Haley and Haley, 2006; Teagarden and Cai, 2009; Warner and Nankervis, 2012), at the same time potentially it was also characterised by Chinese management practices (Liang, Marler and Cui, 2012; Zhang, 2012b; Warner, 2013). This research argues, on the bases of participant observation at Lenovo's Beijing headquarters that Lenovo nowadays adopts the formal culture

of global HRM, while underneath it has moved closer to traditional Chinese management model. The results are similar to Zhou, Zhang and Liu (2012) that emphasise the hybrid HRM concept can explain HRM practices with Chinese characteristics.

In addition, from a cultural perspective, Lenovo's hybrid culture during the M&A period reflects the process of integrating IBM's corporate culture with the original Lenovo corporate culture (Cheng and Yang, 2010; Sun *et al.*, 2014; Cui *et al.*, 2016). This research fills a gap in the literature finding that Lenovo's current level of hybrid culture may be similar to the period of cultural integration. Zhang (2012b) defines "hybrid" as implying that convergence and divergence coexist at the same time. Consistent with this view, this research argues that Lenovo's hybrid culture refers to partly convergence with IBM culture and partly divergence. Specifically, the "One Lenovo" core corporate culture may be seen as a symbol of the convergence of the IBM culture, but this research argues the renewed culture (One Lenovo culture) is not resolving culture contradiction, instead potentially highlight the layering culture in the company. What is more, this research found in participant observation that the company buried *The Lenovo Way* book (which represents its successful convergence with IBM culture) in a warehouse seems to demonstrate cultural divergence in practice. And by analysing the data from the interviews, it seems that the culture clashes that occurred during the M&A period may have continued to the present day. Moreover, recent studies have concluded that Lenovo demonstrates its global identity through its corporate culture (Lin *et al.*, 2020; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023; Zhao and Du, 2023). In contrast to this view, this research extends (Rashidin *et al.*, 2020) view through a cultural perspective by arguing that Lenovo's corporate culture does not seem to be fully globalised. As the empirical data found that the current Lenovo corporate culture may still have remnants of the former IBM corporate culture and the original Lenovo corporate culture. For example, the "practical and enterprising spirits" as Lenovo's original

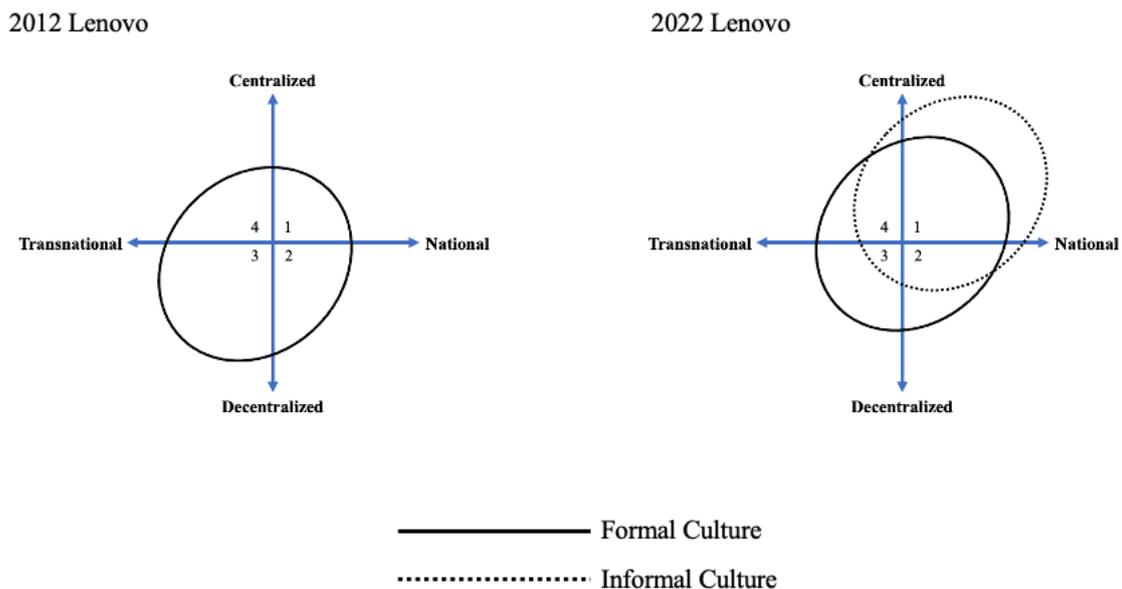
corporate culture may be reflected in the work behaviour of older employees in practice. Thus, this research argues that as Lenovo consolidates its identity as a global player the hybrid culture it has seems to remain unchanged, this hybrid culture refers to two different cultures parallel developments without contradiction.

On the other hand, this research suggests that another possible understanding of Lenovo's hybrid culture may be a changing in the nature of hybridity. This means that Lenovo's hybridity after merger may have been a simple mix of Western and Eastern cultures, whereas the nature of hybridity now tends to favour layered cultures. Understandings of purely Chinese MNE corporate culture are not well analysed through qualitative approaches (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Pareek and Kumar, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2021). This research explains the composition of Lenovo's hybrid culture with participant observation as primary data, thus filling a gap in the academic literature on the factors that constitute an organisation's hybrid culture (Gratton, 2021; Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021; Yousfi, 2021). This research adopts Freud (1922) iceberg theory to discuss Lenovo's corporate culture finding that its hybrid culture may be the coexistence of a surface culture of an underneath culture. Specifically, the surface culture seems present a decentralised and global culture demonstrating its surface identity as a global player, meanwhile the underlying culture could be more representative of the nature of Lenovo's culture in practice. While a number of studies have identified Lenovo as having a decentralised and globalised culture (Stahl and Lengyel, 2013; Liu and Liang, 2017; Boiano, 2020; Yu, 2021; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023), this research suggests that this may be one of the aspects of its culture (as Finding 1). In addition, as academics believe that national culture has an impact on corporate culture (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; Guan, Deng and Zhou, 2020; da Motta and Gomes, 2022), this research finds that the centralised culture as a Chinese domestic culture in recent increasing years may be an aspect that shapes Lenovo's hybrid culture thereby

filling in the gaps in the understanding of what shapes hybrid cultures. As discussed in Finding 2 bureaucracy and high-power distance potentially reflect Lenovo's manifestation of a centralised culture in practice, at the same time, influenced by the domestic government-created advantages, the power of national culture is gradually revealed in practice. Moreover, this research suggests that the legacy of the former IBM corporate culture and the original Lenovo corporate culture in terms of cultural integration as part of the subcultures may form another side of hybrid culture (as Finding 3). Finding 3 also discusses that team culture may be a non-negligible part of Lenovo's hidden culture due to the differences in leadership styles and team working atmosphere that shape Lenovo's subculture. Thus, this research suggests that as Lenovo's culture develops it may gradually become layering culture, with one part of the surface culture dominated by the global culture being known to the public, while the other part of the hidden culture seems to be felt only in practice.

This research finds that Lenovo's hybrid culture may be a dynamic process of cultural development, which hybrid culture may have always existed, or it may be a changing in the nature of hybridity by different cultural forces, as following:

Figure 5.2 A comparison between 2012 and 2022 Lenovo's culture



(Developed by the researcher)

This diagram seems reflect that Lenovo performances more in decentralised and transnational after merger, this confirms Cui *et al.* (2016) research that cultural integration was successful and the company gained global identity, however, their research may underestimate national aspect and this research argues Lenovo was not integrate multinational as global side and national side were co-existing in company culture. Also, from diagram, it can clearly see the movement from 2012 and 2022 is among box 1 (centralised and national) and 2 (decentralised and global), thus the hybrid culture may not be a fixed stage or single culture development. This seems imply the nature of hybrid culture in Lenovo that there is no contradiction between national and transnational culture, and it is not about change cultural attractors, but rather reflect the evolution of its cultural hybridity like magnets interacting with each other. Globalisation as one pole of the magnet may remain similar during the evolution of the hybrid culture. However, the State, as the other pole of the magnet, may change as China's political environment and policies change due to the priorities of the State have shifted, and therefore the magnet represented by the State may become stronger as a cultural attractor, which may lead to a change in the cultural hybridity of Lenovo. This research suggests that decentralised and centralised as different cultural attractors may develop in an equilibrium way, in other words, a decentralised culture may present during the phase of embracing globalisation, whereas in today's development phase of digital transformation the company seems present centralised culture. Thus, the last key finding of this thesis as:

Answer to main research question: The evolution of Lenovo's cultural hybridity may be a dynamic process formed by the interaction of attractors representing different two attractors of centralisation (national) and decentralisation (global).

It is not likely that Lenovo would ever become a purely national company, it will continue to reflect both national culture and western culture. Although IBM influenced Lenovo in practice to make the merger successful, Lenovo may have been hybrid before the merger as an internationally orientated company. Although employees at the global headquarters in Beijing may never have worked abroad and none of them had worked in the US former headquarters, all who had worked for the company since before 2015 were globally in their approach, reflecting Lenovo's hybrid nature as a global and national company. There appears to be some resistance (pushing back) from the Beijing headquarters now as the company works with State government, and Lenovo may receive more national culture than previously, however, there is no observable conflict in the company. Thus, hybrid culture may always have been present in Lenovo, the only change being perhaps the nature of its hybridity.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the thesis findings in response to the research questions and research objectives proposed in chapter I. This chapter discusses that Lenovo's HR strategy may have two sides contributing a new way to understand HRM practices in Chinese MNEs. The findings suggest that Lenovo may already become a multinational company before merger, there was hybrid culture since M&A without conflict between national culture and global culture. There may be kind of hybrid cultures, such as mix hybrid, this research suggests the nature of hybrid culture in Lenovo is layer hybrid. The nature of hybridity changed when the global headquarters in Beijing started received more influence from national by involving in global government digital transformation, therefore, the layering hybrid culture gradually visible in practice. Thus, Lenovo's HR strategy seems to be balanced between centralisation and decentralisation, which helps the research in-depth understanding the nature of the hybrid culture. Meanwhile this chapter explores the components of Lenovo's hybrid culture, the findings consider that legacy of post M&A culture also form part of its hybrid culture, suggesting that

Lenovo's hybrid culture may be a dynamic process of cultural development, which seems the centralised culture is in equilibrium with decentralised culture at different stages. The research key findings are discussed in the light of the relevant literatures in terms of the research questions. A discussion of the research key findings has demonstrated the nature of Lenovo's culture. In next chapter, it will discuss the research contributions and limitations to give recommendations for further research.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research focused on the extent to which Lenovo is transnational, its global identity having been questioned in recent years due to its reverting to its Beijing headquarters (and closer ties with national government) while downgrading the US headquarters. Lenovo was a classic example of Chinese MNE convergence with western model unlike Huawei. It became a significant multinational not only successfully acquired giant US company's department but also set up a global headquarters in US. According to Warner (2003) view that Chinese multinationals are converging with western practices, the question here is not about did Lenovo's past convergence with western models, about whether they are still converging, or, on the contrary, diverging.

Contrary to the expectation that Lenovo may be moving in another direction to convergence with western model, this research has found more complicated picture that the global culture as a formal language still visible in Beijing global headquarters, but there is a strong trend to centralisation and national culture because Lenovo has been reprogramme to keep control back to Beijing headquarters. In other words, Lenovo has not turned completely away from convergence but has become more hybrid in that there has been a gradual layering and partial change due to closer connections to national governmental agendas. This research also found Lenovo is always hybrid with national and global sides, those two sides do not conflict, thus the answer address to what extent is Lenovo is transnational is not about how Lenovo changed to hybrid, it is about what kind of hybrid. Therefore, the answer could be the limited layering affect hybrid and Lenovo's global identity slightly less while favour national more. This research suggests that Lenovo's hybrid nature is not new but that its significance has changed. In the past, the national and transnational influences were not seen as in conflict. What has

therefore changed is the perceived relationship between these two influences, to the extent that they are now seen a potentially opposed.

The case of Lenovo is interesting as most M&A takes a long time to complete merger but the merger with the IBM PC business was achieved quickly and, it appears, very successfully (Cui *et al.*, 2016). It might have been assumed that if Lenovo was a purely Chinese company it would have huge cultural problem when merger US company, thus it is interesting to consider that Lenovo was already partly multinational in its culture before the acquisition and they were ready for globalisation, which is why there appeared to be no significant conflict between the national and global sides of the business at that time. Although Lenovo moved its headquarters to the US and creating the appearance that both the China and US headquarters were part of a unified global operation after the M&A, the “honeymoon” period did not last long under increasing pressure from China in recent years. Lenovo’s global side began to weak as the decision to move its headquarters back to Beijing. Interestingly, although the Beijing headquarters is positioned as the global headquarters, it is still more focused on the domestic Chinese market especially in terms of digital transformation. Meanwhile, the US headquarters continues to operate independently, but its significance has gradually diminished with a reduced headquarters role. How Lenovo responded this is gave more autonomy to US ‘headquarter’ meanwhile use culture control (‘One Lenovo’ culture) to bring US closer to China. Ironically, by saying ‘One Lenovo’ it recognises there are two Lenovo. From cultural perspective, this research argues that Lenovo may was never fully global, although company absorbed Western multinational model be a part of culture to make acquired employee comfortable, the country-of-origin effect may have been another pressure pulling Lenovo back domestically. According to (Warner, 2003; Warner and Nankervis, 2012), the question raised in this research was how far Lenovo practice convergence with Western multinational, it turns

out that Lenovo has never been fully global in the traditional sense. The findings of this research emphasise the convergence does not go reverse, although there is a pressure push convergence away, it is not against each other. In practice, national and global culture attractors continue to push and pull the hybrid culture within Beijing headquarters, which is where the layering hybrid comes from. Consequently, the thesis generates an understanding that centralised and decentralised cultures represent different cultural attractors that have a significant impact on shaping Lenovo's hybrid culture dynamical development.

This research methodology combining observation as participant and interviews enabled richer data collection. By being in the company, one could find out unexpected data, which had major impact on the research. For example, the 'burying' of *The Lenovo Book* story, I would not have found this if I was not in the office, and this story contributed a lot in data analysis as it is a significant example to show how the potential conflicts between national and global culture in the company could be avoided through layering. In addition, the observation experience established the trust between researcher and employees, therefore participants were open to talk more during interview.

Generally, the research methodology of this thesis employs an empirical research approach to triangulate the data of the case study enterprise through observation as participant, interviews and secondary data. In addition, the researcher coded the data through a thematic analysis approach thereby identifying key findings based on the research questions. This chapter is going to present the summary of this thesis, contributions and limitations of this research, and recommendations for future research.

A briefly content of sections in Conclusion Chapter as the following:

SECTION**CONTENT**

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a summary of this PhD thesis and emphasis how the research has achieved the research aims and objectives. • Present a conclusion of this research.
6.3 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present both theoretical and practical contribution which emphasis how this research has addressed literature gaps.
6.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges the limitation of this research.
6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents research suggestions that discuss potential research directions for future researchers.

[6.2 Summary of the Research](#)

The main purposes of this thesis have been to investigate the nature of organisational culture and to explore the evolution of cultural hybridity in a CMNE. Lenovo Group was chosen as a case study as it has been seeing as a classic example of a Chinese multinational embracing globalisation through cross-border mergers and acquisitions. The cultural characteristics of Lenovo as it moves from localisation to nationalisation can provide the researcher with different cultural attractors in order to understand the “what” and “how” different cultural attractors shape its corporate cultural hybridity.

This research aimed to *explore the nature of Lenovo’s corporate culture and investigate the meaning of cultural hybridity* to answer the main research question: *To what extent can the corporate culture of Lenovo be regarded as transnational?* The nature of the research question guides the researcher to adopt the qualitative research method by using Lenovo as a single case

study to conduct empirical research. In addition, the objectives of the research include: (1) to understand the Lenovo's corporate culture in action via participant observation at company's global headquarters; (2) to access in-depth perspectives on corporate culture in Lenovo through semi-structured interviews with participants, as a follow-up to participative observation, and conducting thematic analysis to interpret how the data answered the research questions.

The main finding of this research appears to be that, not about whether Lenovo is hybrid or not, but what kind of hybrid culture it is (it could be fluxing hybrid, mixing hybrid or layering hybrid) which had not been investigated before. Lenovo has had hybrid culture for many years and there was no contradiction between national culture and global culture in Lenovo, until there is gradual pushing from centralisation from national culture, the layering hybrid culture became visible and changed the nature of hybridity. The prior literatures (Chapter II) have demonstrated that hybridity can be used as a cultural domain study. Cultural hybridity seems to reflect the results of cultural integration (García Canclini, 1989; Hao *et al.*, 2016), but this research argues that it does not seem to be as simple as cultural integration by suggesting that cultural hybridity may be a dynamic process. Recent studies have been limited on the evolution of hybrid cultures within enterprises as most studies stop at the stage of cultural integration (Froese *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021b; Tang and Zhang, 2021), there is lack of understanding of how hybrid culture develops in long run. Although some studies argue that national culture plays an important role in determining organizational culture (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; da Motta and Gomes, 2022; Khripunov, 2023), this research adopt Williams and van Triest (2009) research that consider home county culture from Hofstede culture model has impact on decentralisation in MNEs, and this research contributes that the national culture represents State government does important because it may potential "re-shaping" Chinese MNEs corporate culture by becoming one of culture attractors. Case studies on Lenovo started to

decrease from five years ago (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Abdulai and Ibrahim, 2016; Cui *et al.*, 2016; Yu, Dang and Motohashi, 2019). This research builds on Gorton and Zentefis (2020) study that consider the national culture as an aspect of shaping Lenovo's hybrid cultures. In addition, cultural integration ambiguity may be a hidden danger of inadequate cultural integration (Cording, Christmann and King, 2008), this research draws on cultural iceberg emphasis that underneath culture may also be the cultural attractor that forms the Lenovo's hybrid culture.

The research methodology for this thesis was formulated according to the nature of the research problem, as they are exploratory questions with case study. Specifically, as mentioned at the beginning of Chapter III, the researcher compared different research philosophical paradigms and decided to adopt subjectivism as the ontology stance and interpretivism as the epistemological stance because this research is more about to investigate unexpected knowledge rather than examine certain theory. An empirical study was conducted through an inductive approach to interpret the nature of Lenovo's corporate culture and the development of its cultural hybridity. This research in practice also involved an element of a deductive approach through drawn up an informal hypothesis (Lenovo's corporate culture changed), and this is used as a starting point to guide the researcher in collecting relevant data in observation through participant. The research question suggested a qualitative research design for this thesis. Therefore, this research conduct case study research strategy and collect empirical data through multiple sources (includes observation as participant, interview, and secondary data) thereby increasing the reliability of the research. Participant observation enabled the researcher to access the culture that Lenovo really has, not just by observing employee's behaviour and discourse, but also allows researcher experience what the real culture is. The interview data provided the research with an in-depth understanding of Lenovo's culture from the employees' perspective. In addition, the researcher collected secondary data such as company reports,

industry reports, news and other literature. The data collected have been analysed in triangulation to demonstrate the validity of Lenovo's cultural hybridity composition. It is worth highlighting that there is a difference between case study and interview, if this research only consisted of interviews, it could not conclude those findings, and observation help the researcher get unpredictable data in reality and extended further findings from interview. For example, the researcher during observation first identified the phenomenon of layering hybrid culture where what they say does not correspond to what they actually do in observation stage as in Chapter IV. Therefore, the observation data is added value to the findings and reach the conclusion.

Chapter IV has analysed the empirical data and Chapter V has discussed the key findings of this research, all those findings seem to fill the literature gaps where emphasised in Chapter II. Specifically, in Chapter IV the HR strategy seems to reflect Lenovo's dual identity by informally having a global side of convergence western model but in practice behave towards national side, thus suggesting that the company may have a hybrid culture, which seems to fill the gap of the lack of academic understanding regarding the present Lenovo culture. One of findings in Chapter IV indicate that Lenovo's culture can be seen as an iceberg, with a decentralised and globalised culture as a surface culture on one side and underneath culture formed by centralised culture and subculture on the other side. This finding departs from the conventional view (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Boiano, 2020; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023; Xu, 2024) that Lenovo has a global culture. Also, the findings in Chapter IV suggest that the underlying centralised culture may gradually come to the surface as Lenovo is responding to the national digital transformation strategy. This finding is broadly in line with those (Hellriegel, Slocum and Woodman, 2004; Badham, Bridgman and Cummings, 2020; Peters *et al.*, 2022) who argue that the invisible part of culture iceberg are deeply ingrained and often lay hidden, waiting to

be awakened. Furthermore, the thesis has discussed the key findings in answer to the research questions in Chapter V. From finding it can be argued that Lenovo's hybrid culture seems to be a dynamic process that may maintain an equilibrium with centralisation and decentralisation, potentially fills a gap in academic understanding of cultural hybridity within the enterprises. Additionally, the key findings extend (Alofan, Chen and Tan, 2020; da Motta and Gomes, 2022; Khripunov, 2023) studies and identified that the Lenovo's cultural hybridity may shaped by global attractor and State attractor with a dynamic development where Lenovo presents transnationalism once global attractor plays more important role in company development; vice versa. This research also fills a gap in the literature on the development of Lenovo's hybrid culture that the global attractor may not have changed during the evolution of Lenovo's cultural hybridity, but State attractor seems have changed as the priority of national development strategies potentially has shifted from encouraging Lenovo to enter globalisation to "controlling" enterprise to return domestic country in order to support the process of digital transformation. This in line with (Tzeng, 2011; Chen, 2022; Guo and Zhao, 2023) research that the State plays an important role in Chinese enterprise development. Therefore, this research found that national cultural seems to be a major perceived influence on Lenovo's hidden culture, which may potentially create a tendency of cultural hybridity in terms of centralised and decentralised cultures.

In conclusion, from cultural point of view that Lenovo may have always been two sides as the company was already a multinational before merger. In other words, Lenovo may always have hybrid culture, the nature of hybridity may have changed when the company started focus back on home country and work with national government. This seems to imply hybrid culture may never a problem as different cultures were not conflict, however, in recent years the centralised element pushing back Lenovo to national side slightly more, the layering hybrid culture gradual

became visible in practice. During China's reform and opening-up period, the Chinese government was "in favour" of global trade and free trade, as result Lenovo focused on developing its globalisation thus showing that it had a global aspect. However, trade wars in recent years have chilled private sectors, while at the same time the Chinese government has begun to expand on strengthening the digital transformation process in the country, thus Lenovo has gradually turned to the domestic market to seek market opportunities brought by the government creates advantages. Broadly private sectors might prefer in line with the Chinese party, whenever during the reform and opening-up period or at the current stage of development of the digital transformation phase, from cultural perspective seems that the national side and global side have always been there. On the other hand, it seems there is no tension between two sides but parallel hybridity. In other words, Lenovo's cultural hybridity seems to be shaped by both national and global cultural attractors which in the past keeps the same, there is no contradiction between two attractors that the State side is not conflict with global side. However, the State side changed the direction of magnet, and this change may have led to differences in the development of cultural hybridity because of the collision of different cultural attractors, thus Lenovo globalisation may still continue, but the organisation is no longer as open as before. Overall, the Lenovo's surface culture is similar, and what has been changed is underneath culture, and the changed in the underneath seems do not affect the surface culture.

6.3 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

6.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis attempts to propose four contributions to the literature on cultural field assisted cultural hybridity, since research in these areas is relatively new and the related literature is still limited.

Firstly, this research contributes to the understanding that the Lenovo merger with IBM was not about a national Chinese company merging with a Western company, but rather about two multinationals, specifically a highly centralised Chinese multinational enterprise (CMNE) merging with a Western multinational. The curious thing about Lenovo is that the conflict does not come from M&A, it starts when the centralised culture of the CMNE reverses the significance of the multinational, therefore it gets layered. The research on the corporate culture of MNEs (especially M&A firms) has argued that cultural differences caused by geographical differences can be resolved through cultural integration (Chakrabarti, Gupta-Mukherjee and Jayaraman, 2009; Frijns *et al.*, 2013; Ahern, Daminelli and Fracassi, 2015). This thesis contributes based on the multinational M&A firm culture theory that the corporate culture of the acquired company and the original culture of the acquiring company seem to persist after cultural integration and exist as subcultures within the organisation over time. Also Gorton and Zentefis (2020) suggests what shapes corporate culture needs to be addressed in the post epidemic era. Therefore, this research empirically investigates the corporate culture of cross-border M&A firms through a human resource strategy perspective, thereby contributing to the evolution of culture in cross-border M&A firms.

Secondly, this research leverages and extends the Hofstede (1980) model of national culture by considering national political culture as a national cultural factor. As Riley (1983) pointed out that political culture as a subculture is one of the factors that contribute to the complexity of corporate culture and suggests that the complexity of corporate culture needs to be explored further. This research found that China governmental culture priority was an important influence on Lenovo, specifically, the centralisation in practice at Lenovo seems to be in line with the State political culture. Therefore, this research contributes empirically to the growing indirect “intervention” of the Chinese government in corporate development under the centralised

development of the Chinese political system, which seems to potentially embed a centralised culture as national culture in enterprise's corporate culture.

Thirdly, the thesis on the understanding of “hybrid culture” enhances the originality of this research. Although hybridity began to be studied in the field of culture at the end of the 19th century (García Canclini, 1989; Hall, Chambers and Curti, 1996), there is a lack of literature understanding how cultural hybridity develops in organisations. This research contributes to understanding how cultural hybridity develops in organisations. Lenovo has multinational culture right in the beginning and there is hybrid culture between national and global without conflict, the nature of hybridity changed when company close with digital transformation development as the centralised culture force strengthened. Recent research on corporate culture has also demonstrated the need to consider studying culture in relation to “hybridity”, such as hybrid systems (Ge and Zhao, 2020), hybrid work styles (Gratton, 2021), and hybrid structures (Yaari, Blit-Cohen and Savaya, 2021). Also, the literatures tend to still focus on Lenovo post-acquisition (Babu, Li and Hou, 2020; Feng, Liu and Liu, 2023; Wu and Chernyaev, 2023; Xu, 2024), the recent story of Lenovo towards more parent country and needs to explore the nature of CMNE in terms of cultural. This research contributes to understanding how cultural hybridity develops by adopting Lenovo as a case study and updates the most recent interpretations of Lenovo's corporate. Therefore, the key findings of this research contribute to a new understanding of cultural hybridity, consisting of different cultural attractors seem carrying out a dynamic development like a magnet field. Therefore, this thesis hopes that the key findings will draw the attention of cultural studies scholars to this concept.

6.3.2 Practical implications

One of the practical implications of this thesis is that from the findings this would suggest that the centralised culture reflected in the national domestic culture may be a dominant cultural

attractor at this stage of Lenovo cultural hybridity. This potentially could help the company recognise the underlying cultural attractor. This research contributes a different understanding of cultural hybridity that the State government is not a new culture attractor to be a part of company's culture as they were there before, and the culture within the private sector has always been hybrid but no one cared as there was no perceived problem or contradiction. However, the relationship between the hybrid elements has been changed as the State side may be less open now, thus it shows Lenovo's cultural hybridity develops towards the national side.

Another practical implication could be that this research offers evidence for Chinese MNEs to rethink their organisational culture. In other words, the culture itself may already be global, rather than emphasising global culture by acquiring an overseas company. For Chinese firms wishing to move towards transnationalism through cross-border M&A this research contributes the practically meaningful view that corporate culture integration does not seem to be the end of success but allows the hybrid culture itself to evolve dynamically. The empirical research of Lenovo reveals that Chinese multinationals going global through cross-border M&As potentially have two cultural attractors, and that these cultural elements may collide with each other as the company's strategy develops. Cultural integration should not be responsible for the development of cultural change but should consider the nature of cultural hybridity. In other words, the nature of hybridity change could not only consider the influence from Western culture, the national culture also a cultural attractor to reshape kind of hybridity. This seems to provide an empirical case for the cultural management of Chinese MNEs, where cultural hybridity may not be fixed, and different cultural attractors develop parallel like magnets, however, once one cultural attractor changes, it could affect its overall cultural hybridity to tilt. What is more, CMNEs should not regard hybrid culture as a threat or problem, because

international business is hybrid in nature in some way, the change to different kind of hybrid may happen when there is pushing back against globally trends.

6.4 Research Limitations

This research has investigated a relatively unknown area under cultural topic. Therefore, inductive research approach with qualitative methods was considered most appropriate. As with all research, this research is not without some research limitations.

The findings of this research are restricted to analysis the Lenovo global headquarters in Beijing, thus one of the limitations is the lack of consideration of Lenovo's overseas subsidiaries. In other words, since the primary data source for this research comes from Lenovo's global headquarters in Beijing, there is a lack of a wider discussion of Lenovo's cultural hybridity in a global geographic context. I should clarify that I intentionally did not collect primary data from Lenovo's overseas subsidiaries because the global epidemic postponed my data collection for a year, thus I did not have as much time to travel to multiple locations to complete participant observations. Similarly, considering Lenovo as a large multinational company the sample size of interviews in this research is relatively small. There were nearly 30 Lenovo senior managers from global headquarters had already expressed their interest to participate in the research at the interview stage, but for unknown reasons only 11 participants could be interviewed in the end. Although it could be a frustrating result, it could provide empirical implications for subsequent qualitative research.

As mentioned in the literature gap that most of the research on corporate culture tends to use quantitative research methods. Unfortunately, the nature of this research data does not allow

us to determine the extent to which Lenovo cultural hybridity exists in the presence of the cultural attractors found.

This research key findings should not be taken as evidence for cultural hybridity in Chinese transnationalism enterprises. Due to this research uses a single case study and therefore the results are not representative, in other words the formation and evolution of Lenovo's cultural hybridity is hardly representative of all Chinese MNEs.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Firstly, it worth looking again on this topic in five more years to explore how well 'One Lenovo' culture has developed, as researcher assume this renewed culture may accelerate the layering between US branch and Beijing global headquarters. As discussed in this thesis, for now the layering hybrid seems does not contradiction, in long run it could be more visible when company influenced more by national side. Thus, it is interesting to research again and contribute more knowledge on layering hybrid culture.

Secondly, it can be extended this research in the future and discusses the extent to which different cultural attractors affect Lenovo's layering hybrid culture by collecting primary and quantitative data from Lenovo's overseas subsidiaries. The discussion of cultural hybridity can be extended to other Chinese MNEs analysing technology firms by comparative cases in an attempt to make the understanding of layering hybrid culture more industry representative.

Thirdly, future research into cultural field might usefully focus in particular on political cultural, through political governance and leadership perspectives to investigate how Chinese State government contribute to layering hybrid culture shaping.

Lastly, this thesis has concentrated on the nature of culture through the lens of HR strategy and thus identifies how cultural attractors shapes cultural hybridity. It would be interesting to consider another lens, such as employee behaviour, to understanding the relationship between employee's behaviour and layering hybrid culture.

Appendix

Figure 2.1 The parameters of this research

Parameter	Narrow	Broader
Subject area	Corporate culture after M&A	Corporate culture
	Chinese national culture	National culture
	Hybridity culture in Chinese multinational company	Hybridity culture
Geographical area	China	Asian countries
Publication period	Last 5 years	Last 20 years
Literature type	Academic journals	Journals and books

Figure 2.2 A framework for strategically managing political imperatives.

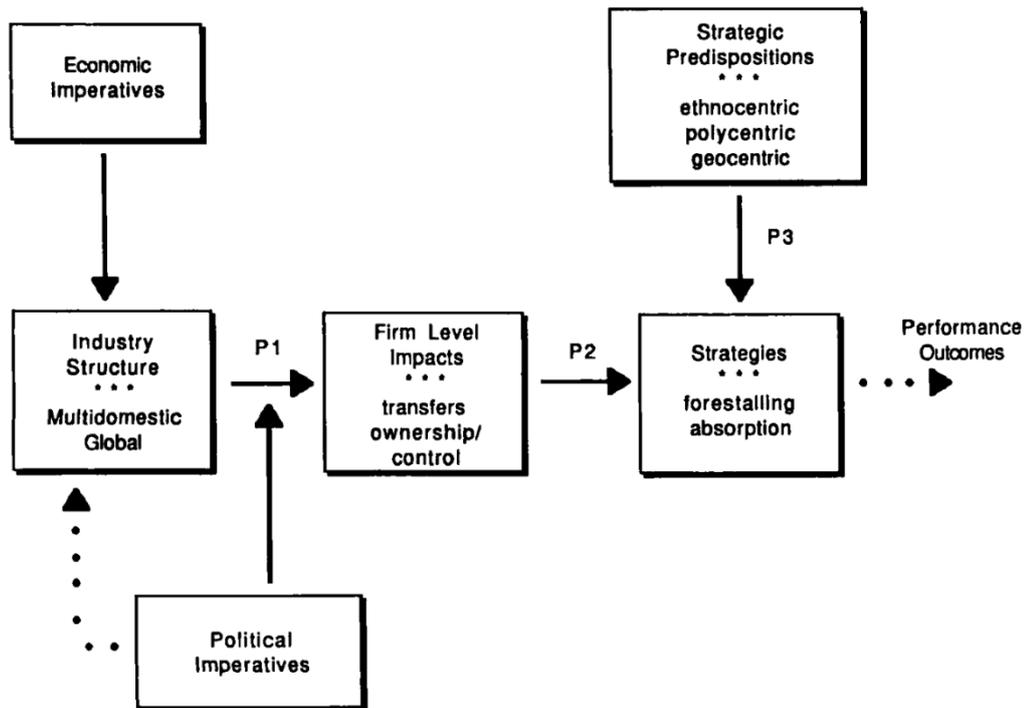


Figure 3.1 The 'research onion'.

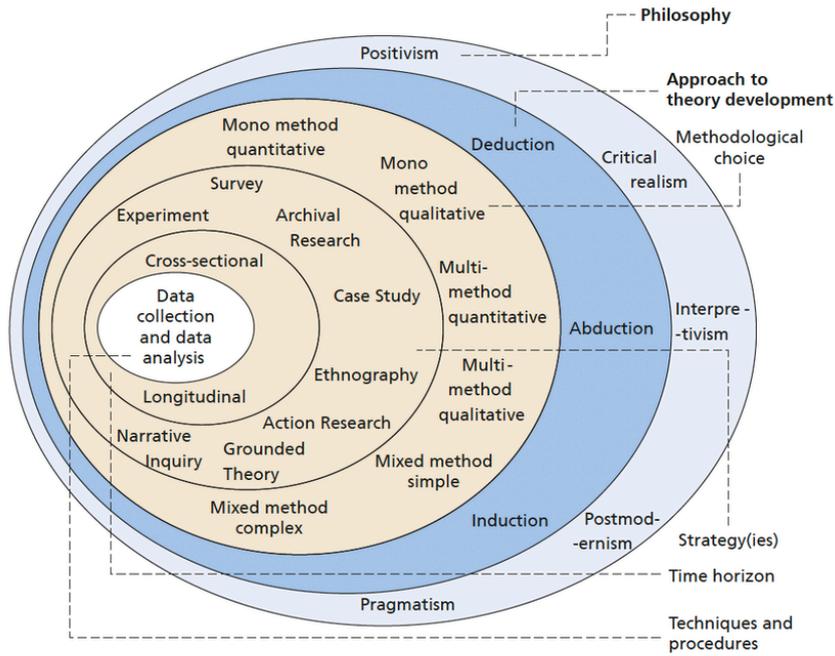


Figure 4.1 The 'research onion'
Source: ©2018 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill

Figure 3.2 Schematic outline of the empirical cycle.

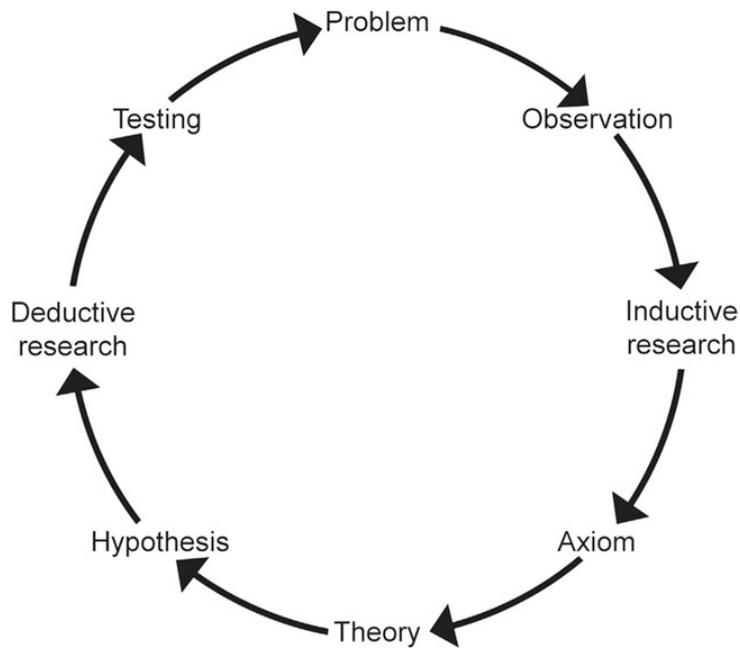


Figure 3.4 Typology of participant observation researcher roles.

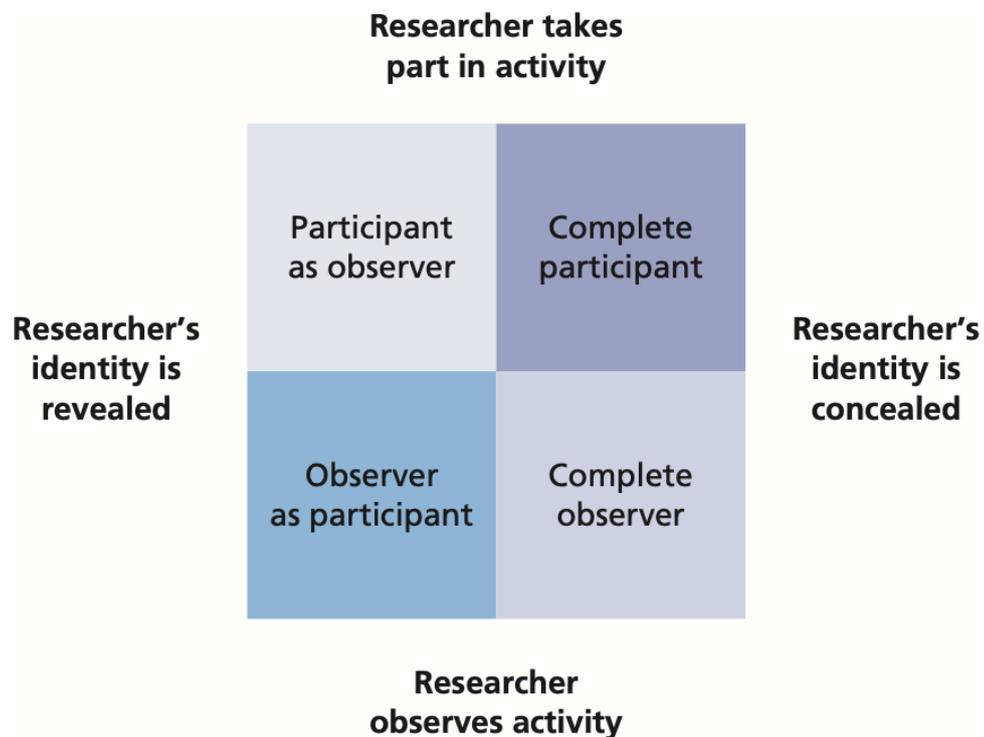


Figure 3.6 Sampling framework.

Non-probability sampling

Purposive sample: selection made by the researcher on theoretical grounds
 Snowball sample: selection via the units of study

Quota sample: selection made by the researcher on the basis of the number of units needed and features or characteristics of interest

Self-selection: by respondents through voluntary participation

Probability sampling

Random sample: selection from a known population on the basis of chance
 Stratified random sample: selection from pre-defined strata (groups or sub-populations) on the basis of chance

Cluster sample: selection of a number of units on the basis of a shared feature or characteristic

Two-step sample: a combination of several different probability formats

Figure 3.7 A flow chart of selecting a non-probability sampling technique.

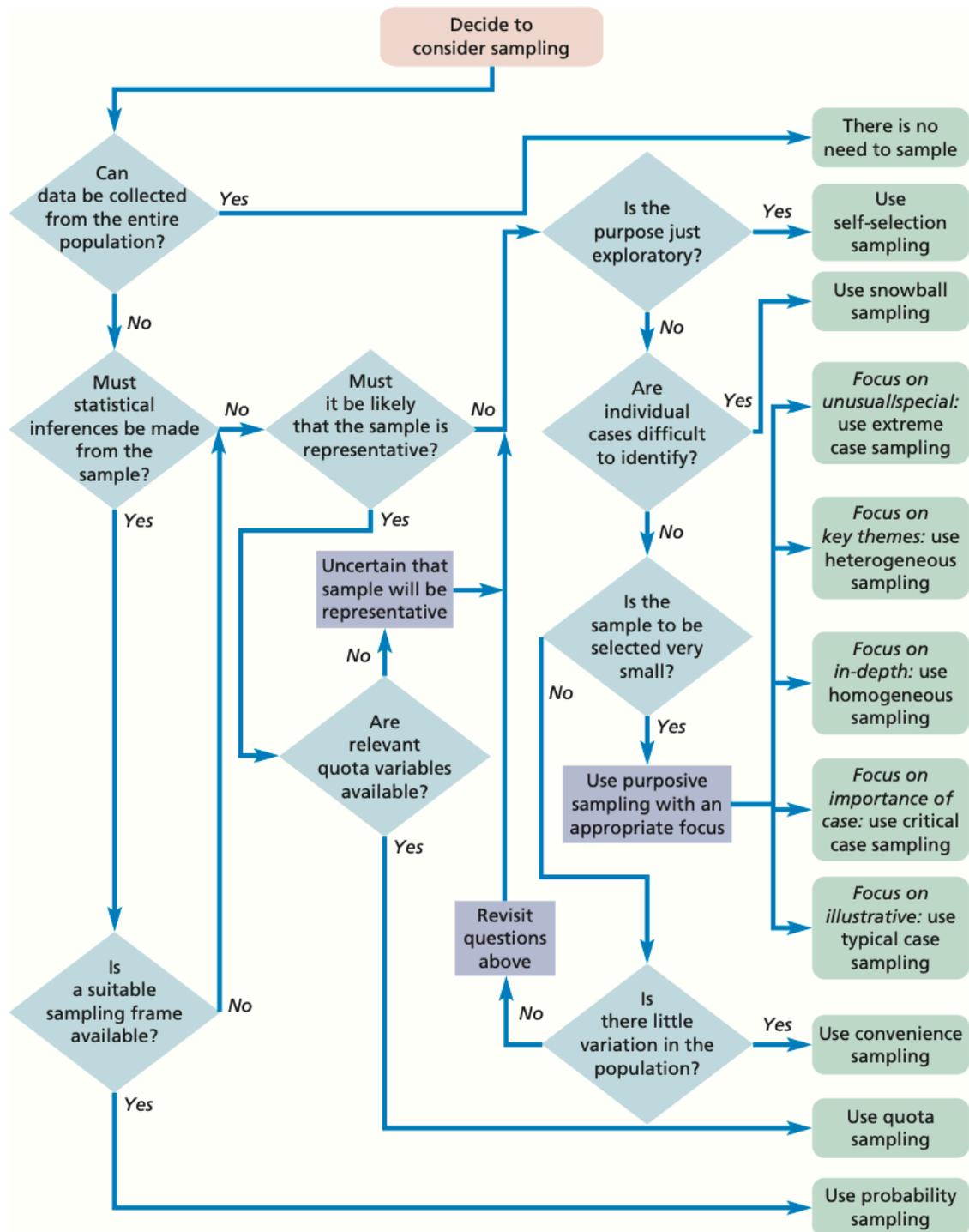


Figure 3.9 Types of secondary data.

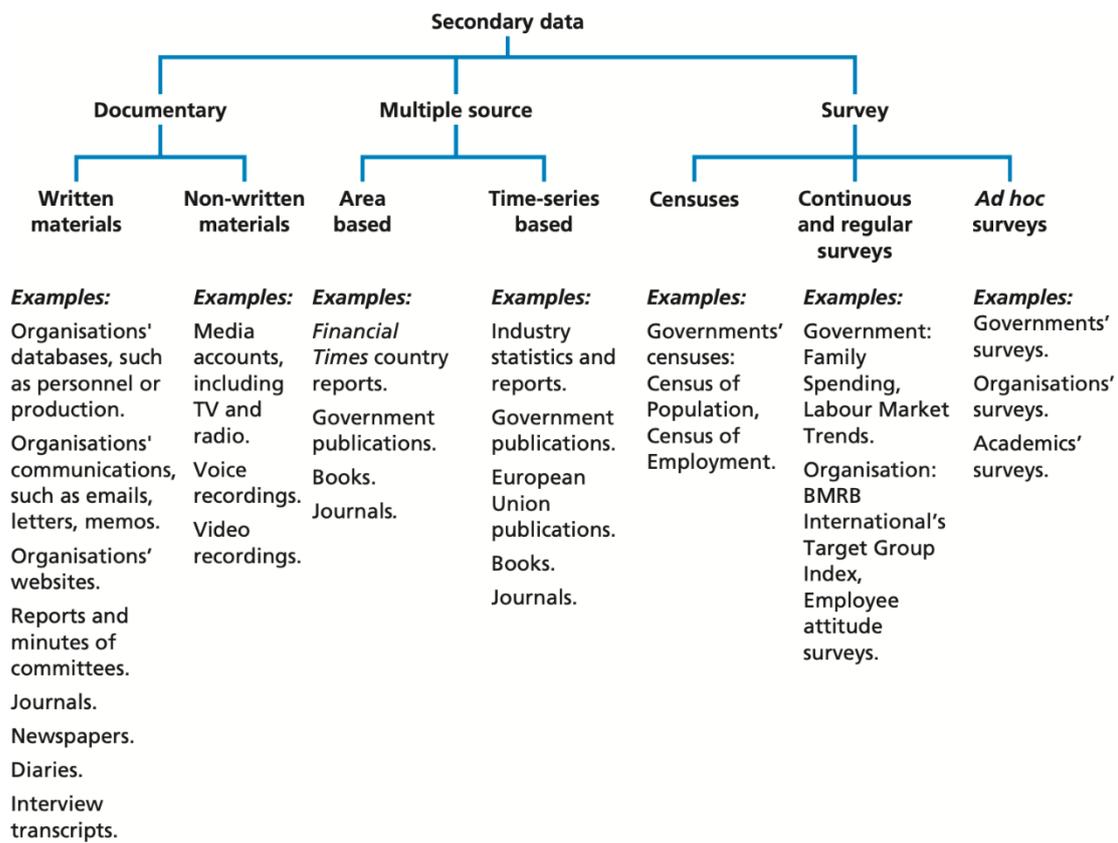


Figure 3.10 Phases of thematic analysis.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

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