

## REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-55542

Title: Optimal design of hydropower tunnels for cost efficiency in Albania.

### Recommendation:

Accept as it is .....

Accept after minor revision.....

Accept after major revision .....

Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

| Rating         | Excel. | Good | Fair | Poor |
|----------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Originality    | ✓      |      |      |      |
| Techn. Quality | ✓      |      |      |      |
| Clarity        |        | ✓    |      |      |
| Significance   |        | ✓    |      |      |

Reviewer Name: Mr. Bilal Mir

### Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

The article, “*Navigating Power and Influence: U.S.–China Rivalry and India’s Strategic Repositioning in the Indo-Pacific*,” engages with a central geopolitical dynamic shaping today’s international order. It explores the growing strategic competition between the United States and China while positioning India as a key middle power adjusting its foreign policy within an increasingly contested Indo-Pacific environment. By focusing on India’s strategy of hedging and multi-alignment, the manuscript addresses a subject that is both timely and highly relevant to ongoing discussions in International Relations, Strategic Studies, and Indo-Pacific research.

The author offers a persuasive account of the Indo-Pacific’s transformation toward a form of competitive multipolarity, emphasizing the stabilizing influence exercised by middle powers, with India as a prominent example. The study draws effectively on structural realism, middle power theory, and the concept of strategic hedging to construct a robust analytical framework. This combination allows the analysis to capture both systemic pressures and national-level choices, particularly India’s preference for maintaining strategic autonomy while expanding partnerships rather than committing to formal alliances.

In terms of organization, the manuscript is clearly structured and progresses logically from its theoretical foundations to empirical analysis. This sequencing supports the clarity of the central argument and enhances readability. The sections examining U.S.–China rivalry and India’s evolving strategic posture are especially successful in connecting great-power competition to India’s foreign policy responses. Moreover, the inclusion of discussions on multilateral engagement and geoeconomic competition broadens the scope of the analysis by addressing non-military aspects of Indo-Pacific dynamics that are often overlooked.

Despite these strengths, the manuscript would benefit from minor revisions prior to publication. The most significant concern relates to language and presentation. Numerous grammatical issues, stylistic

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inconsistencies, and typographical errors appear across the text, detracting from its academic polish. Addressing these problems through careful copy-editing is necessary to improve clarity and maintain scholarly standards.

From a conceptual standpoint, the argument would be strengthened by more precise definitions of key terms such as “strategic hedging,” “multi-alignment,” and “middle power.” In particular, a clearer differentiation between India’s current approach and its earlier non-aligned posture would help avoid potential ambiguity and enhance the article’s analytical contribution, especially for readers less familiar with the existing literature.

The methodological design, which relies on qualitative document analysis, is appropriate for the research objectives. However, the methodology section could be modestly expanded to explain the selection criteria for official documents and secondary sources. Furthermore, incorporating a limited number of concrete empirical examples—such as specific naval initiatives, Quad-related activities, or regional connectivity projects—would help ground the theoretical discussion more firmly in observable policy practice.

The conclusion effectively brings together the study’s main findings and presents policy recommendations that are coherent and well aligned with the analysis. The focus on inclusive multilateralism, confidence-building mechanisms, and coordination among middle powers is both pragmatic and relevant for policymakers. While the references are up to date and suitable, minor formatting inconsistencies should be corrected to comply with the journal’s citation guidelines.

Overall, the manuscript represents a valuable contribution to scholarship on Indo-Pacific geopolitics and India’s strategic positioning. Its arguments are well developed, theoretically informed, and of interest to both academic and policy audiences. As the suggested revisions are largely editorial and clarificatory, they do not detract from the article’s core strengths. On this basis, I recommend the manuscript for publication following minor revisions.