

Top Fillon Supporter Dines in Moscow as France Fears Kremlin Election Interference

By [Katie Marie Davies](#)

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Francois Fillon **Remi Jouan / Wikicommons**

A close associate of French presidential candidate Francois Fillon has come under fire for attending a gala dinner in Moscow on Sunday.

Thierry Mariani, a member of France's National Assembly, had been a vocal supporter for Fillon in the run-up to primaries for the French Republican party on Sunday. Fillon won in the election against his rival Alain Juppe, securing 66 percent of the vote.

Mariani's presence in Moscow taps into French fears that Fillon is being backed as a Kremlin-friendly candidate.

Russia at the heart of Paris: Read more on [how France's presidential elections are set to be a win-win for the Kremlin.](#)

Russian state media have previously praised Fillon as “a friend of Russia,” while the former Prime Minister has been described as “outstanding” by Putin himself.

Marine Le Pen, the French presidential candidate for the far-right Front National, has already admitted to receiving money from Russia to fund her campaign.

Mariani defended his trip to the Russian capital, claiming on Twitter that he was in Moscow to speak with French voters in the city.

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[@chem5eddine](#) Soyez plus original ! Suis Ã©lu par les franÃ§ais de l'Ã©tranger et les franÃ§ais de [#Russie](#) sont mes Ã©lecteurs ... donc normal !

— Thierry MARIANI Û (@ThierryMARIANI) [November 27, 2016](#)

"How is Putin?" one Twitter user asked. "Is he also taking part in the primaries with his rubles?"

"Be more original!", Marianai replied. "I am elected by French people living abroad and French people in Russia are my electorate- so it's normal!"

Mariani, who has been dubbed “the voice of Russia” by [French newspaper Le Monde](#), previously triggered condemnation in Paris when he visited the Russian-annexed Crimean peninsula in 2015.

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