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New York Times' Friedman Raps Russian Foreign Policy

By Alexander Bratersky

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Russia has continually failed to adequately present its foreign policy agenda in Washington, award-winning New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman said in Moscow on Thursday.

The Russian Embassy is a "black hole" in terms of openness for journalists who want to hear Russia's point of view on international events, Friedman said at a conference dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Russia in Global Affairs magazine.

"The Chinese leave you in the dust," Friedman said, adding that the Chinese Embassy was much more welcoming to American journalists and pundits in Washington.

Friedman, a foreign policy columnist who has won three Pulitzer Prizes, said he had never been invited to the Russian Embassy, even when he opposed NATO expansion, which paralleled Russia's stance.

He added that he had never seen Russian Ambassador Sergei Kislyak, who, he said, keeps a low profile in Washington.

Russian efforts to improve the nation's perception in America backfired recently when Kremlin-funded public relations firm Ketchum was caught up in a controversy over peddling ostensibly independent opinion pieces to popular media outlets.

Several pieces praising Russia were published on CNBC's website and the Huffington Post in the last two years without mentioning that they had been pitched by a Kremlin-funded firm, the New York Daily News reported in mid-November.

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