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From 1997 to 2001, he served as U.S. ambassador-at-large for the former Soviet Union. In this capacity, he was the State Department's principal officer responsible for policy toward Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union.

Prior to joining the State Department, Ambassador Sestanovich worked at two of Washington's leading public policy research organizations. From 1994 to 1997, he was vice president for Russian and Eurasian affairs at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. From 1987 to 1994, he was director of Soviet and East European studies (later Russian and Eurasian studies) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

From 1984 to 1987, Ambassador Sestanovich served as senior director for policy development at the National Security Council. He was a member of the State Department's policy planning staff from 1981 to 1984 and senior legislative assistant to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan from 1980 to 1981.

Before coming to Washington, DC, he was assistant professor of political science in the graduate faculty of the New School for Social Research (1978–80) and visiting assistant professor of political science at Columbia University (1979–80).

Ambassador Sestanovich received his BA from Cornell University and his PhD from Harvard University. He is coauthor or editor of several volumes on international affairs and has contributed articles to the *National Interest*, *Foreign Affairs*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Policy*, *American Interest*, *New Republic*, and other publications. He is a member of the board of directors of the National Endowment for Democracy.