



The  
*Insight*Bureau

# STEPHEN OLSON

FORMER US TRADE NEGOTIATOR

VISITING SENIOR FELLOW, INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST  
ASIAN STUDIES - YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE

*A leading authority on International Trade,  
Geopolitics and US Trade policy*

# STEPHEN OLSON

## about

Stephen Olson is a highly renowned expert on **international trade, economic, geopolitical and business issues**. Over the course of his more than 30-year international career, he has lived and worked in Asia, the Middle East and the United States, holding senior executive positions in the **private sector, government, research institutions, and academia**.

He is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow at the **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) – Yusof Ishak Institute**.

He is also a visiting lecturer and non-resident fellow at the **Clayton Yeutter Institute of International Trade and Finance** and a Senior Adjunct Fellow at the **Pacific Forum**

From 2014 to 2024, Olson was a research fellow at the **Hinrich Foundation** in Singapore, on whose behalf he conducted analysis and produced white papers and thought leadership pieces on various global trade and investment issues, including US-China relations, the global trade architecture, regional integration, and sustainable trade.

He is also an adjunct professor at the **George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government** and lectures in Beijing at the **Capital University of Economics and Business** as part of a joint program.

Stephen is a member of the **World Economic Forum's Global Futures Council (GFC)** on Trade, and he co-leads a joint workstream with the WEF GFC on Geopolitics.



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## about

Stephen Olson was the recipient of a **Certificate of Recognition** for outstanding services as a member of the U.S. negotiating team for the Canada free trade negotiations, as well as a **Certificate for Sustained Superior Performance** during the NAFTA negotiations. He has been accredited by the New York Department of Economic Development as a certified international trade consultant.

He was also a Visiting Scholar and Adjunct Associate Professor in the MBA program at the **Hong Kong University of Science and Technology**. Stephen has guest-lectured at numerous institutions, including the **US State Department's Foreign Service Institute**, and has also developed and delivered training programs for Southeast Asian government officials on trade negotiation strategies and trade policy development.

Previously, he served as the **Vice Chairman** for Policy and Business Development at the Cairo-based **ARTOC Group** for Investment and Development, one of the leading conglomerates in the Middle East. Prior to that, he was the **President** of the Hong Kong-based **Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC)**, one of the region's oldest and most prominent business organizations.

He began his career in Washington DC as an **international trade negotiator** and served on the US negotiating team for the NAFTA negotiations. Olson was previously an **Adjunct Fellow and Managing Director (Asia)** for the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington, DC, on whose behalf he has conducted commissioned research projects on global economic issues.

He has a Master's degree in International Relations from the **Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies** and a B.A. from the **State University of New York**.



# STEPHEN OLSON

## Speaking topics

- **Trump, Trade & Turmoil:** making sense of the new landscape for international trade. What are the likely geopolitical and economic implications of new trade tariffs, the likelihood of retaliation, and the real threat of a full-blown trade war? What are the key concerns for international businesses managing global supply chains?
- **US Politics and Global Geopolitics:** Understanding how policy decisions are made in Trump's Washington, and importantly how they will impact the rest of the world. Trump is dramatically redefining the US' historical role on the global stage. How will this reconfigure the global geopolitical chessboard? What are the implications for China, the EU, Japan and others?
- **China and the US:** What is really behind the recent threat and imposition of trade tariffs and non-trade restrictions against China, as well as the long-simmering trade war? Beyond trade, what are the possible geopolitical and techno-nationalist motivations behind such moves?
- **Collapse of Global Trade System:** the rules-based global trade system, established in the aftermath of the Second World War has been a primary driver of economic growth and development for eight decades. That system is now unraveling. What are the economic and geopolitical implications and what might arise to take its place?
- **Southeast Asia:** Given greater integration with China in the region, how will smaller countries need to work hard to balance their relations with simultaneously with both China and the USA and that the orderly trade system is reset? Will these countries inevitably be "caught in the middle"?
- **An Opportunity for the Global South?** As the post-war global order continues to unravel, what are the challenges and opportunities for the global south? Do countries like India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa now have an opportunity to exercise greater global leadership?
- **Sustainable Trade:** the vital link between global trade and the need for economic, societal, and environmental resilience and how, in an era of disruptive forces, such as geopolitical tensions, economic instability, climate change and health crises, we need to adopt more sustainable trade practices more than ever.

# STEPHEN OLSON

## key facts

Currently ...

- Visiting Senior Fellow, [Yusof Ishak Institute](#), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
- Visiting Lecturer and Non-Resident fellow, [Clayton Yeutter Institute of International Trade and Finance](#)
- Member, [World Economic Forum](#) Global Futures Council (GFC) on Trade

Formerly ...

- Research fellow at the [Hinrich Foundation](#), Singapore
- Visiting Scholar and Adjunct Associate Professor, MBA program, [Hong Kong University of Science and Technology](#)
- Senior Adjunct Fellow, [Pacific Forum](#)
- Adjunct fellow and managing director (Asia) for the [Economic Strategy Institute](#) in Washington, DC
- Guest lecturer, US State Department's [Foreign Service Institute](#)
- Vice Chairman for Policy and Business Development at the Cairo-based [ARTOC Group](#) for Investment and Development
- President of the Hong Kong-based [Pacific Basin Economic Council](#) (PBEC),
- Masters Degree in international relations from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He has also studied at McGill University in Montreal and has a B.A. from the State University of New York.

Flies from [Bangkok](#)



## Useful links for Stephen Olson:

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