
Stephen Olson



A renowned expert on global trade, geopolitics and economics, with 30 years of experience across government, private sector, academia, and research institutions.

Stephen Olson is a distinguished international trade expert with over 30 years of experience spanning Asia, the Middle East, and the United States. His career encompasses leadership roles across private sector, government, research institutions, and academia. No one is better placed to help analyse current trade and geopolitical developments, to help us anticipate what may come next, and to understand what this means for global businesses.

Currently, he serves as a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies – Yusof Ishak Institute and a Visiting lecturer and Non-Resident Fellow at the Clayton Yeutter Institute of International Trade and Finance. Until 2024, he was a research fellow at the Hinrich Foundation, where he analyzed global trade issues including US-China relations and regional integration, ASEAN, the global trade architecture, regional integration, and sustainable trade.

He 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.

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. Previously, he was a Visiting Scholar and Adjunct Associate Professor in the MBA program at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Olson was also an adjunct fellow and managing director (Asia) for the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington, DC.

He began his career in Washington DC as an international trade negotiator and served on the US negotiating team for the NAFTA negotiations. He worked in the Executive Office of the President, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and the U.S. Department of Commerce. He subsequently became President of the Hong Kong-based Pacific Basin Economic Council (PBEC), one of the region’s oldest and most prominent business organizations and played a lead role in the development their policy recommendations on trade and economic issues. He then served as the Vice Chairman of Cairo-based ARTOC Group for investment and development, one of the leading conglomerates in the Middle East.

Stephen is a highly sought-after commentator on network television outlets such as the BBC, Bloomberg and CNBC, and is frequently quoted in international media, including the NY Times and Wall Street Journal. He is a frequent public speaker at conferences, roundtables, and seminars throughout the region, and has authored

numerous articles in prominent publications such as Nikkei Asia, the International Herald Tribune, the South China Morning Post, the Bangkok Post, Forbes, American Prospect, the Diplomat, and East Asia Forum.

He holds a Masters Degree in international relations from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a B.A. from the State University of New York, with additional studies at McGill University.