

Devin Nunes Reemerges

By Victor Davis Hanson

2024 proved to be the year of the reemergence of many once and unfairly pilloried public figures.



Elon Musk weathered nonstop attacks on his X social media platform. Furor escalated over his newfound 2024 Trump advocacy—even as he ended 2024 with his iconic Tesla brand still the best-selling car in six states and the most popular electric vehicle in the entire nation.

Tesla's rising stock prices ensured by year's end that Musk was by far the richest man in the world with a net worth of well over \$400 billion. His recyclable SpaceX Super Heavy starship rocket booster mesmerized the nation as it returned to the launch pad to be caught by a huge mechanical arm.

After January 6, 2021, the media swore that Donald Trump was supposedly washed up. He left office with a 34 percent approval rating. Over nearly the next four years, Trump would face 91 felony indictments and be liable for over \$400 million in assorted fines.

Now he is a reelected president. Former oppositional world leaders traipse to Mar-a-Lago to seek his approval even before his tenure begins. His erstwhile critics at home are scurrying

about in disarray.

The Trump-hating media who swore Joe Biden was “sharp as a tack” and “fit as a fiddle” are mostly discredited and are, for now, still bleeding audiences. And Trump’s chief political adversaries, Nancy Pelosi, Liz Cheney, Joe Biden, Kamala Harris, and the Obamas are increasingly either unpopular or irrelevant—or both.

Yet one unremarked-upon return is that of former Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA), who, after 20 years of representing Central California in Congress, retired on January 1, 2022, from the House to become CEO of the newly formed Trump Media & Technology Group, tasked to oversee its social media platform, TruthSocial.

Nunes has regained public attention over the last two weeks after Trump appointed him to become chairman of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board, which oversees the conduct and performance of America’s intelligence agencies.

And once more he too is the target of tired residual left-wing venom, as a “pugnacious Trump loyalist” in the words of the *New York Times*.

Like almost all former chairs of this nonpaying advisory board, Nunes keeps his full-time job. His old critics claim he has conflicts of interest, given he serves Trump in both a private and public capacity.

Of course, these complaints come from those who saw no conflict of interest when Vice President Joe Biden flew to China with his son on Air Force Two to shake down foreign communist oligarchs and apparatchiks by using his office to enrich, tax-free, the Biden family syndicate. And no one alleges that Nunes ever became rich, in the fashion of the two Pelosis, who leveraged privileged congressional insider knowledge to make “wise” investments.

But more importantly, why would Trump not pick Nunes to enact the board's mission statement to oversee "the Intelligence Community's compliance with the Constitution and all applicable laws, executive orders, and presidential directives?"

After all, he shattered the Democratic hoax of Russian-Trump collusion between 2015 and 2018, even as his lead investigator, Kash Patel, the next FBI Director, was himself an object of FBI surveillance.

As Nunes once pointed out, why did Obama's non-intelligence officials, like UN Ambassador Samantha Power, seek to unmask dozens of names of U.S. officials, most of whom were political opponents?

So, who could Trump better trust to oversee the intelligence and investigatory bureaus than someone who knows all too well the descent of these agencies into Trump-Derangement-Syndrome-inspired chronic dissimulation and illegal surveillance?

After all, the former CIA Director John Brennan, the former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, and the former interim FBI Director Andrew McCabe all, by their own admissions, lied under oath either to Congress or federal investigators. Former FBI director James Comey pled amnesia or ignorance 245 times before the House Judiciary and Oversight Committee.

Trump himself, remember, was the object of a vile and fabricated hit "dossier" of Christopher Steele. Nunes proved Steele was a Democratic Party-paid opposition research functionary and an erstwhile FBI informant. Should not Trump have good grounds to want a known bulldog as an overseer of the suspect intelligence agencies?

Do we remember the "51 former intelligence officials?"

Some were hardly "former" at all, given they still had enjoyed

contracts with government intelligence agencies. On the eve of 2020, they blatantly “misled” the nation that Hunter Biden’s laptop, authenticated at the time by the FBI, had all the “hallmarks” of a Russian disinformation operation.

Such unapologetic election interference by our best and brightest—including former CIA Directors Leon Panetta and John Brennan—may well have played a role in the outcome of the 2020 election.

But what perhaps infuriates the left most is Nunes’ resiliency and ability to sluff off its chronic hysterias. Again, as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, he revealed to the nation that Christopher Steele’s accusations were little more than gossipy fabrications from a discredited ex-British spy—at a time when the media and the Democrats in Congress had cited his “research” chapter and verse in near-biblical fashion.

Moreover, Nunes showed that Steele himself was hired by Democratic interests through the use of various paywalls—the DNC, the Perkins Coie law firm, and Fusion GPS—to help ruin the 2016 Trump campaign, on the false and ridiculous charge of colluding with the Russians to throw the election. His team further found that the dossier of Steele, again a one-time paid informant of the FBI, was used in part to obtain an FBI lawyer-forged FISA warrant to spy on American citizen Carter Page.

At the time, candidate and then President Trump was under unprecedented attack. At his inauguration, riots broke out. Madonna publicly declared to a crowd that she thought about blowing up the Trump White House.

Trump was branded a Russian “puppet” who should be removed just days after his swearing-in. Indeed, according to a *Foreign Policy* article by one Obama administration leftover official, the left was supposed to depose him quickly, either

by impeachment, the 25th Amendment, or a military coup.

So those were certainly surreal times, at least until Nunes's committee issued a controversial memo that laid out most of the skullduggery but only earned him unprecedented media venom.

Only years later, with the issuance of Inspector General Michael Horowitz's investigative report, the conclusions of the House oversight committee investigations, and the reportage of a few bold journalists, did the public fully confirm there was never anything to the "Russian collusion" charge, other than a Clinton, and then administrative state, effort to destroy Trump by any means other than an election.

In those crazy times of 2017-2020, the media buzzed with predictions that special counsel Robert Mueller's "dream team" and "all-star" lawyers would consume Trump and his supporters.

Nunes himself was written off as a California dairy farmer way over his head, with legacy media headlines blaring, "Trump-Russia Investigation: A Former Dairy Farmer, Rep. Devin Nunes Leads Historic Probe!"

The media sought to contrast Nunes with supposedly brilliant, Harvard-law-trained Adam Schiff, the then-minority party's highest-ranking member on the Nunes committee. Schiff would supposedly devour the chairman—in what the media would boast would become a war between a supposed yokel from the Central Valley pitted against an Ivy League pro. Years later today, Schiff's prior insistence on a real Trump-Russian collusion effort in 2016 and his persistence that the Steele dossier was factual remain even more laughable. A farmer might editorialize that it takes far more savvy and resilience to run a dairy farm than it does to graduate from Harvard.

When Trump appointed Nunes the head of TruthSocial, the same sort of hick/rustic stories reemerged about Nunes. He was now again supposedly "over his head," as the blinkered rustic

trying to make it in the cutthroat world of sophisticated social media.

We were told TruthSocial would meet the same fate as Parler. That ascendant 2020 start-up conservative alternative was sabotaged by the left-wing Twitter monopoly that had conspired to ban Trump and partner with the FBI to suppress news unfavorable to Biden's 2020 campaign.

It was left to the trifecta of Apple, Google, and Amazon to destroy Parler by denying its critical application platforms to the general public.

Over the last three years, the media gleefully reported, erroneously, that TruthSocial was nearly bankrupt, hemorrhaging users, piling up operating debt, without operating capital, and losing a critical merger bid. They high-fived the TruthSocial 30-month war with the SEC—one of the most drawn out and politicized in its history—which, in likely partisan fashion, had sought to delay or block TruthSocial's partnership with Digital World Acquisition Corporation (DWAC).

As in the case of the Russian collusion hoax, the media was both predictably hostile and wrong, as it serially predicted that Nunes and Truth Social would fail from its very beginning. For nearly three years, it sounded the same "walls are closing" doom and gloom hysterics where it had left off with 'Russian collusion.'

We were assured that Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter meant that the huge social media platform would veer right and preclude any need for TruthSocial. For over three years, headlines in scare caps assured, as did a Bloomberg autumn 2022 screed, that "The Walls Are Closing in on Trump's TRUTH Social."

At about the same time, a giddy *Washington Post* boasted that "Trump once reconsidered sticking with Truth Social. Now he's

stuck.” And still, the chorus continued a year later with *New York Magazine* blaring the same narrative, “Trump’s Truth Social Is an Unmitigated Failure.” And on and on.

Certainly, when Musk purchased Twitter, renamed it the free-speech platform X, endorsed Donald Trump, and welcomed banned conservatives back to the now-reinvented old Twitter, it questioned the original reason-to-be of TruthSocial.

Yet despite media obituaries, 2024 ends with the Trump Media & Technology Group’s stock price at some \$35-37. In October, the company’s worth soared to an incredible \$10 billion in market capitalization—albeit a figure representative of speculative interest rather than the size of its profits or market share.

Still, unlike the old Twitter, TruthSocial had little overhead and ran a tight ship. It reportedly has some \$700 million in cash on hand. And it enjoys something no other platform can quite rival—the near-exclusive domain of the President of the United States, 2-million of his followers, and over 600,000 investors. Most of the media’s sensational stories about its massive operating losses were never borne out by its officially released filings.

Tens of thousands of Americans have invested in TruthSocial because of what it stands for and their faith in Donald Trump. In that sense, they confound Wall Street orthodoxies about the magnitude of company size and profitably in gauging stock prices.

There is a sort of nemesis theme to all these hubristic Nunes hit stories: the clueless bumpkin from a California dairy who turns out to have exposed one of the great scandals of political malfeasance in modern history, or the fumbling ex-farmer driving the ridiculous Trump media platform into, at one recent point, a \$10 billion net worth—and multibillion-dollar profit for Donald Trump.

Critics are right that the TruthSocial stock is astronomically

“overvalued”, but seem clueless as to why that is and why it may remain more or less so.

It is a well-run company, and its inseparable brand, Donald Trump, is no longer the media’s Satan but increasingly a widely admired, resilient, and indomitable figure, traits that even his exhausted enemies grudgingly concede.

So, looking back at the years of insanity, where now are all the officials and pundits who swore that Nunes was either incompetent or sinister?

Ryan Lizza, who in 2018 published a bizarre hit piece for *Esquire* by bird-dogging Nunes’s parents on their dairy in Iowa, was fired for sexual misconduct from *The New Yorker*. He was recently embroiled in a messy, he-said/she-said courtroom psychodrama—replete with charges and countercharges of blackmail, theft, and physical intimidation—with his erstwhile fiancé, the peripatetic Olivia Nuzzi.

The dissimulator quad of Brennan, Clapper, Comey, and McCabe has receded into irrelevancy, only occasionally reemerging in half-hearted fashion to reassert their stale first-term Trump accusations.

No one believes the pompous Schiff memo was more accurate than the Nunes brief it attacked.

No one vouches for the bogus Steele dossier, or that Steele himself was a skilled and professional ex-intelligence agent, or that Hunter’s laptop was cooked up in Moscow, or that Carter Page was a Russian spy working to subvert the 2016 election.

No one trusts that Samantha Power had legitimate reasons to request the unmasking of nearly 300 Trump officials, many of them her political enemies, or that the FBI did not collude with social media to suppress news unfavorable to Joe Biden in 2020, or that the intelligence agencies initially were

accurate in parroting the official line that the COVID virus was birthed by a bat or pangolin.

Yet the disillusioned public also wants to know what these intelligence agencies did not do when they were otherwise so busy hunting down fantasy conspiracy theories and knee-deep in domestic partisan politics.

Did they warn us that the entire U.S. effort in Afghanistan was about to collapse, in the greatest humiliation of the U.S. military in a half-century, as it abandoned over \$50 billion in weapons to terrorists?

Did they have a clue about what Hamas, Iran, and Hezbollah were up to before October 7?

Did they ever sense that Vladimir Putin was about to stage a massive attack on Kyiv on February 24, 2022?

Did they ever have any hint about what two near-successful Trump assassins were up to?

Did they ever honestly report what exactly was going on at the Wuhan virology lab and to what degree our own health officials were complicit in it?

And how does China keep producing state-of-the-art ships, warplanes, drones, and weaponry that seem eerily to resemble or replicate original American designs?

As in the case of the newly appointed reformist directors of the wayward FBI, Pentagon, or National Institute of Health, so likewise the intelligence agencies need and should welcome the civilian oversight of Devin Nunes and his new board—to ensure they start doing what they were tasked to do and not continue to do what they were not.

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