Security concerns dominate contemporary thinking about Mexico. But for those with vested interests in securing Mexico—ranging from state officials, to the international community, and everyday citizens—vastly different and often competing notions, visions, and experiences of safety, justice, and the ability to secure and sustain lives and livelihoods exist. President Enrique Peña Nieto and the international community are hailing the strides Mexico is making in confronting its serious and well-known security problems. Steps to advance traditional "state security" concerns have gone hand-in-hand with constitutional reforms to achieve gains in economic security, hoping to assure foreign investors that Mexico is a safe and secure foreign investment opportunity. But if Mexico is indeed more secure, why do citizens express a growing sense of insecurity, especially in areas rich in the resources that are the hinge of Mexico’s new wave of economic transformation? A phenomenon I call the “paradox of patrimony” demonstrates that those who live and work in the midst of Mexico’s most valuable and strategic “national” resources are experiencing a newly found sense of insecurity and vulnerability. Using case studies that closely examine both a site of natural patrimony and a site of cultural patrimony, I show that citizens are 1) growing increasingly insecure with the purported gains in economic security across the national landscape and 2) that the link between new efforts to secure national patrimony and citizens’ experiences of insecurity offer a new way to understand resource security.

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