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He has served in government (French foreign ministry's policy planning staff, international security adviser to the Minister of Defence), industry (vice-president of Thomson-CSF, today's Thales; senior vice president at Matra Défense Espace, now part of Airbus) and academia (Professor at Sciences-Po Paris, director of the IISS). He has sat on national and international blue-ribbon bodies, notably the French government's White Paper "La France face au terrorisme" (2006) and the presidential Defence and national security White Papers (under President Sarkozy in 2007-8 and President Hollande in 2012-2013); the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (2009-2010); the International Commission on the Balkans (2004-2005); the EU Commission's group of personalities on security research and development, 2005). He was a drafter of the ground-breaking Finnish governmental report on the Effects of Finland's possible membership of NATO (2016).

He chaired the International Institute for Strategic Studies from 2002 to 2018, and the Foundation Council of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (1998-2018). In 2015-2017, he was a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow at the Bosch Academy in Berlin.

He dealt with defence and national security issues as part of Emmanuel Macron's presidential campaign in 2016-2017. Currently, he is active in the ongoing debate on Western support for Ukraine.

He has written extensively on defence and security questions and is a frequent contributor to specialist and main-stream media. His latest book, "Leçons d'une guerre", is published by the éditions Odile Jacob, Paris, one year after the beginning of Russia's attempted invasion of Ukraine .

François Heisbourg is the recipient of a number of orders, notably the French Légion d'Honneur (officer), Germany's Grosses Verdienstkreuz, Luxembourg's Ordre de la Couronne de Chêne (commander), Finland's Order of the Lion (commander), Spain's Merito militar.

François Heisbourg is a graduate of Sciences-Po (Paris), and the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA).

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