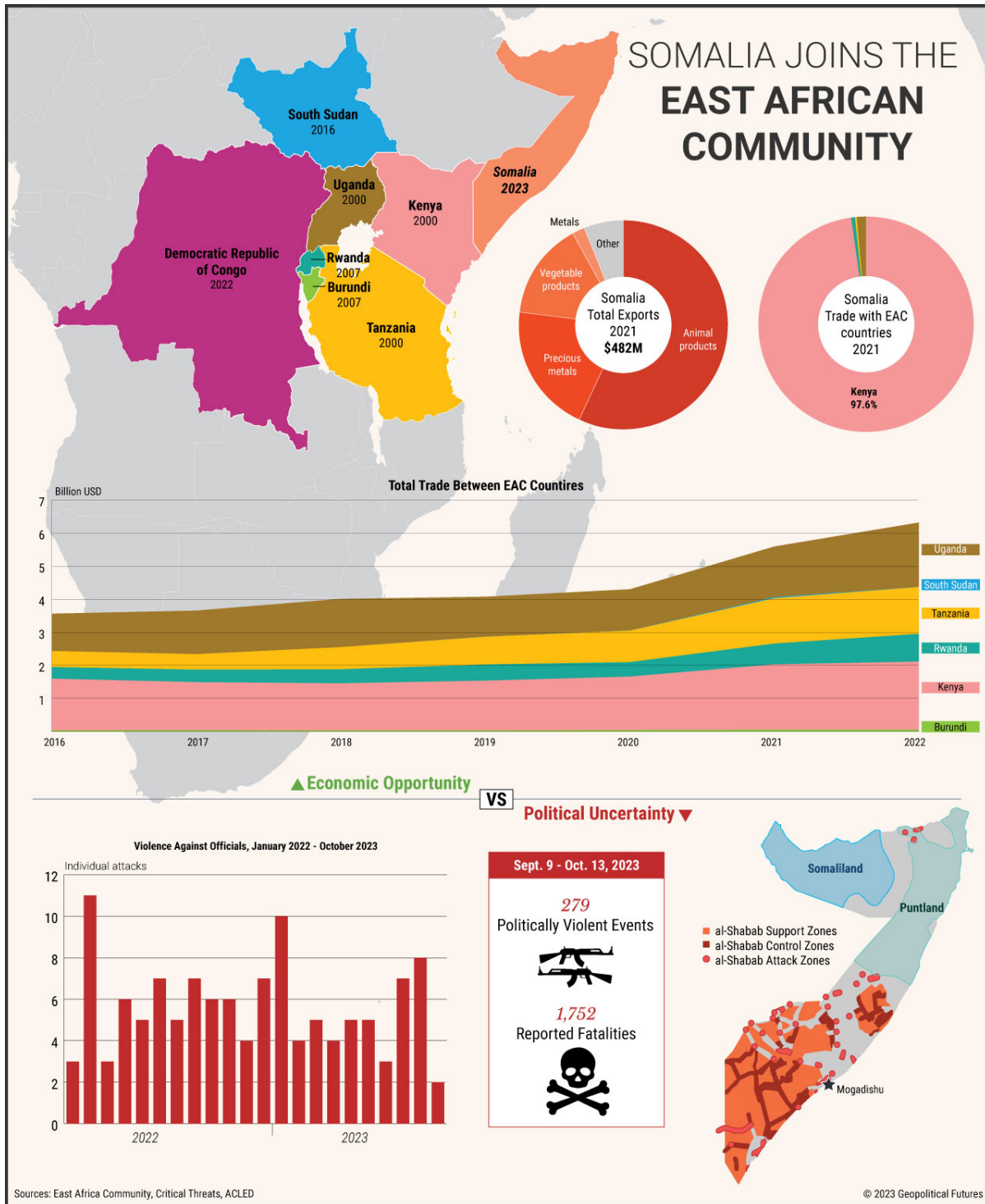


East African Trade Bloc Welcomes Somalia

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Somalia's accession to the East African Community marks a significant geopolitical shift, despite the country's struggles with al-Shabab, environmental catastrophes, violent separatist movements and governance issues. The move promises to be mutually beneficial.

To accept Somalia, the EAC – not for the first time – ignored its own standards of good governance (exceptions were previously made for the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan). The bloc sees expansion as a strategic step toward increasing its economic clout, part of a process that has begun in earnest since the pandemic with a push for enhanced trade integration.

For Somalia, EAC membership opens avenues for increased trade, especially with the Middle East. This is particularly pertinent given that Somalia's major trading partners, including the UAE, Oman, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, are outside the EAC. Additionally, EAC membership will bolster Somalia's regional trade relationships within the bloc.

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