Counter-narrative interventions may affect some risk factors related to violent radicalisation, but there is no effect on intent to act violently.

Counter-narratives may affect certain risk factors for violent radicalisation, including realistic perceptions of threat, in-group favouritism, and out-group hostility. However, the effects are inconsistent across outcomes, failing to target symbolic threat perceptions, implicit bias or intent to act violently.

Whilst the findings from this review support the feasibility of the concept more broadly, they also highlight the care and complexity needed to design and implement effective counter-narratives in the context of violent radicalisation.

What is the aim of this review?
This Campbell systematic review examines the effects of counter-narrative interventions on primary and secondary outcomes relating to violent radicalisation. The review summarises evidence from 19 independent studies, including 12 randomised controlled trials. The majority of the included studies are from North America.

Counter-narrative interventions which target a specific, dominant narrative can have an effect on certain risk factors for violent radicalisation.

What is this review about?
Narratives which reduce complex, real-world phenomena to simplistic, violence-promoting propaganda can activate the necessary mechanisms for violent radicalisation to occur. To stop this from happening, researchers and counterterrorism practitioners have turned to counter-narratives; targeted interventions that challenge the instrumentality of violence as put forth in dominant narratives.

This review summarises the available evidence on the approach, looking at whether counter-narratives are effective at preventing violent radicalisation across a spectrum of contexts, including right-wing, ethnic, and religious extremism.

What studies are included?
This review includes studies that evaluate the effects of counter-narrative interventions in individuals exposed to a dominant narrative which, if not countered, may promote a violent extremist belief system. The outcomes targeted by the intervention include the intent to act violently, as well as ‘risk factors’ for violent radicalisation.

Nineteen studies met the inclusion criteria. These studies span the period 2000-2018 and mainly include study populations of university and high school students.
Although the studies represent a range of geographical locations, the majority were conducted in North America.

Twelve of the studies are moderate-high quality randomised controlled trials and the remainder are quasi-experimental studies.

**Do targeted counter-narrative interventions work on violent radicalisation?**

Counter-narrative interventions which target a specific, dominant narrative can have an effect on certain risk factors for violent radicalisation. However, these effects vary according to intervention-type, as well as outcome targeted.

Using counter-stereotypical exemplars, alternative narratives and inoculation techniques (eliciting resistance through the production of counter-arguments) were all found to reduce overall risk factors for violent radicalisation. Persuasion did not have a significant effect.

The most pronounced effects were for secondary outcomes (i.e. risk factors), which included realistic threat perceptions towards an adversarial group, in-group favouritism, and out-group hostility.

Evidence on the effectiveness of the intervention at targeting primary outcomes (such as intent to act violently) is inconclusive.

**What do the findings of the review mean?**

The concept of using a communication strategy to directly counter a dominant narrative, whilst intuitive, likely requires a great deal of theoretical complexity in order to work effectively in the area of counter-terrorism.

Nonetheless, the targeted counter-narrative approach shows promise. With the emergence of further, rigorous research, the extent of its ability to effectively prevent violent radicalisation will become clearer.